

# Owner and public comment on the Spruce Hill Historic District

7/26/23

5021 Upland Street  
Philadelphia PA 19143

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia PA 19102

Dear Ms Fadullon or the appropriate person,

I am writing to support your Commission on behalf of the Spruce Hill neighborhood and its request for historical designation. My interest is that I live near there and want to continue benefiting from its beauty and uniqueness.

I have several points that I would appreciate your response to.

1 History includes narratives of local residents, cultural connections, architecture, parks, and physical character. Giving Spruce Hill a historic designation would help preserve all of this.

2 Giving Spruce Hill a historic designation also has several environmental benefits. There are currently mature shade trees that keep the air cooler and cleaner than it would be if these trees were destroyed to put up apartment buildings. In addition, the neighborhood already has a healthy level of density. One negative consequence of increasing that density would be additional stress on the sewers. Construction projects also cause pollution and contribute to global warming. A historic designation would keep the neighborhood cooler and less toxic.

3 Spruce Hill has been an ethnically and economically diverse neighborhood, made up of long-term homeowners and renters. Some of the homes provide generational wealth, especially for Black families. Giving the Spruce Hill neighborhood a historical designation would promote affordability by stabilizing property values. On the other hand, new apartments that have already gone up in the neighborhood have not brought the costs of rent down, so they do not benefit lower-income people. Finally, some people have argued that home maintenance costs are prohibitive for lower-income homeowners when their neighborhoods receive a historic designation. However, there is financial support from various resources that help keep them in their homes so that they can continue to enjoy living in a beautiful neighborhood. Therefore, I don't think a historical designation will lead to displacement of long-term residents.

I hope you will grant Spruce Hill the historical designation it deserves and I eagerly await your response.

Sherri Michalovic  
sherrigastman@gmail.com

*Sherri Michalovic*



# PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

*for greater philadelphia*

February 16, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

I am writing to support the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant nomination. The nomination is the first of four that will, after many years, recognize the significance of the West Philadelphia neighborhood. The nomination clearly demonstrates that the district meets criteria A, C, D, E, and J.

These efforts began in 1987 when the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, a predecessor to the Alliance, developed a nomination to designate a Spruce Hill historic district to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. An updated nomination was completed in 2002, but it, too, stalled.

Fortunately, the significance of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District was recognized in 1997 when the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District, which encompasses the proposed district boundaries, was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Almost three decades later, however, Spruce Hill remains worryingly unprotected in an environment of unrelenting real estate development pressure.

Spruce Hill is said to have the largest collection of Victorian-era residential architecture of any American city. Yet most of it is not regulated and is therefore subject to demolition or inappropriate alteration. Since the preceding Spruce Hill historic district nomination was written in 2002, a handful of historic districts were enacted nearby, such as Drexel-Govett, 420 Row (420-434 S. 42nd Street), 4208-30 Chester Avenue, Chester Regent, Satterlee Heights, and Powelton Village. But the vast majority of Spruce Hill remains largely unregulated and unprotected.

The Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant, is a fitting addition to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. We applaud the Spruce Hill Community Association, University City Historical Society, and their partners for moving this nomination forward.

Sincerely,

Paul Steinke, Executive Director



March 28th, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

We are writing to support the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant nomination. As representatives of the Steering Committee for the Young Friends of the Preservation Alliance (YFPA), we support the efforts of the Spruce Hill Community Association, the University City Historical Society, and their partners for documentation and responsible advocacy efforts. The nomination makes an overwhelmingly compelling case for the historical significance of this neighborhood in the period of significance between 1850-1930. The Spruce Hill neighborhood is by most counts the largest collection of Victorian architecture in the United States. Additionally:

YFPA rejects the caricature of preservation advocacy as only a cause for older people and property owners. Young people and renters care about historic neighborhoods. In most cases, we will live in these neighborhoods longer than the older people! Developers in the student housing market and landlords do not represent the best interests of young people, either college students or those who make Philadelphia a vibrant place today. Developers and landlords represent themselves and their investors.

YFPA rejects the false dichotomy between preservation and development, as well as the developer's misguided and self-interested rhetoric of "organic growth." Nobody is claiming that the neighborhood shouldn't change. A historic district can serve as an effective tool of preservation planning. In a neighborhood facing intense development pressures, it can help to coordinate the interests of different community stakeholders and ensure that future growth is sustainable and equitable. Current academic research suggests that the relationship between historic districting and the supply of affordable housing is site- and context-specific. Within a historic district, there is still opportunity to create affordable housing for all age groups in Spruce Hill. Hopefully, developers working in accordance with the district regulations that the Historical Commission helps to create will recognize the immense opportunity to supply housing that is both affordable and rich in historical character.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Bates, Patrick Bayer (Co-Chair), Kevin Block, Talcia Brown, Alison Eberhardt (Co-Chair), Alyssa Pizzi, Greg Prichard, Tyler Ray, Lee Riccetti, Ha Leem Ro and Tyler Schumacher

Steering Committee, Young Friends of the Preservation Alliance





**KLEHR HARRISON  
HARVEY BRANZBURG LLP**

Michael V. Phillips, Esquire  
Direct Dial: (215) 569-2499  
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1835 Market Street, Suite 1400  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
[www.klehr.com](http://www.klehr.com)

April 5, 2024

**VIA EMAIL ONLY**

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Philadelphia Historical Commission  
[Jon.Farnham@phila.gov](mailto:Jon.Farnham@phila.gov)

**Re: Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant**  
**CHD Hearing: April 17, 2024**  
**PHC Hearing: May 10, 2024**

Dear Dr. Farnham:

This firm is counsel to Campus Apartments LLC, University City Housing, and numerous other owners of real property located within the boundaries of the recently-nominated Spruce Hill Historic District (the “proposed district” or “SHHD”).<sup>1</sup> As you know, on October 11, 2023, Spruce Hill Community Association (“SHCA” or the “nominator”) nominated the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant (the “SE Quadrant”) for inclusion on Philadelphia Register of Historic Places (the “Register”).<sup>2</sup> By SHCA’s own admission, the SE Quadrant nomination is incomplete, insofar as it does not include a full and complete inventory of the proposed district. Notwithstanding, on February 2, 2024, the Philadelphia Historical Commission’s (the “Commission” or “PHC”) staff accepted the SE Quadrant nomination as complete. This unprecedented decision to consider the nomination of a proposed historic district in a piecemeal fashion runs contrary to the Philadelphia Code, the Commission’s Rules and Regulations, and fundamental notions of fairness and due process. On behalf of our clients, I therefore strenuously object to the Commission’s consideration of the SE Quadrant nomination as **incomplete** and **unripe** for determination. The Commission *must* return the nomination to the staff as incomplete and refrain from considering the merits of the proposed district until a complete nomination is submitted, inclusive of full inventory and description of each and every property in the proposed district.

SHCA’s fragmented approach to the historic nomination of the SHHD directly conflicts with the purpose and intent of the Philadelphia Zoning Code and is highly prejudicial to the rights of property owners within the boundaries of the proposed district. SHCA contends it separated the proposed district into quadrants “for administrative purposes . . . intended solely to ease the burden on the Philadelphia Historical Commission and staff of reviewing nearly 2,000 properties in a single nomination.” There is no precedent or authority for the Commission to review and/or approve a

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<sup>1</sup> Campus Apartments, University City Housing, and their respective affiliates, subsidiaries and related entities own over 150 properties within the proposed district; more than fifty of which are located within the “Southeast Quadrant.”

<sup>2</sup> This marks the third effort to nominate the proposed SHHD to the Register. The first two efforts – in 1987 and 2002, respectively – failed.

*partial* historic district. The nominator does not contend that the SE Quadrant stands on its own merits as a distinct historic district. To the contrary, SHCA admits that the nomination “describes the whole of the Spruce Hill Historic District, [however] only the Southeast Quadrant is currently proposed for listing. Nominations for the other three quadrants will follow as the inventories are completed.” Further adding to the incomplete nature of the nomination is the nominator’s express caveat that “the northeast, northwest and southwest quadrant boundaries are subject to change.” Once again, by the nominator’s own admission, the nomination is incomplete.

#### **A. The Nomination Is Incomplete**

The Historical Commission’s Rules and Regulations define a “District,” in relevant part, as “[a] geographically definable area possessing a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and/or public interior portions of buildings and structures united by past events, plan or physical development.” Rule 5.7.b of the Commission’s Rules and Regulations requires District nominations to include certain information, such as “a narrative description of the district’s physical appearance” and “a narrative statement of the district’s significance,” with citations to the specific criteria for designation that the proposed district satisfies. In addition, Rule 5.7.c further *requires* district nominations to include “a descriptive, evaluative, and photographic inventory . . . organized by street address” for each and every property within the proposed district.

The Commission’s staff is tasked with reviewing nominations for completeness. Rule 5.8 explicitly warns that “staff shall not forward incorrect and/or incomplete nominations to the Committee on Historic Designation or the Commission.” In the instant case, the nomination is incomplete by the Commission’s express standards. As noted above, a district nomination is not complete without an inventory that “shall include an entry for every property within the [proposed] district.” See Rule 5.7.c (emphasis supplied). The nomination does not contain “a descriptive, evaluative and photographic inventory” of approximately three-quarters of the properties within the proposed district. The nomination merely includes a partial inventory of only those properties in the so-called SE Quadrant. The SE Quadrant, however, does not constitute a “District.” The SE Quadrant merely reflects SHCA’s arbitrary division of the proposed district into four quadrants. By marking the piecemeal nomination of the SE Quadrant as “complete” and forwarding the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation (the “Committee” or “CHD”), the Commission has violated the mandate of Rule 5.8 and prematurely attempted to claim jurisdiction over 379 properties within the SE Quadrant.<sup>3</sup>

There is no precedent or authority for the Commission to consider and/or designate a *partial* historic district. Nor is there any legal basis or authority to treat district nominations differently based upon the size of the proposed district. The Commission is only authorized to review *complete* nominations of proposed historic districts. The size of the proposed district is immaterial. As such, the Awbury Historic District, with its thirty-three properties, is subject to the same requirements, standards and criteria for designation as the Spring Garden Historic District, with its more than 2,000 properties. SHCA made the intentional decision to include “nearly 2,000 properties” within the

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission already maintains jurisdiction over the 193 properties within the SE Quadrant that are already listed on the Register individually, or as part of an existing historic district.

proposed district. The proposed district is smaller than and/or comparable to the existing Rittenhouse-Fitler, Society Hill, Old City and Spring Garden Historic Districts – all of which were logically reviewed and considered as complete districts at the time of designation.

**B. The Unprecedented, Piecemeal District Nomination Violates the Due Process and Property Rights of Over 1,000 Property Owners**

SHCA proposes to create the largest historic district in Philadelphia since the designation of the Old City Historic District in 2003, yet without providing the requisite notice or an opportunity to be heard to over 1,000 property owners within the proposed district. The Commission is required to send written notice of the proposed district designation “to the owners of each building, structure, site or object within the proposed district” at least sixty days prior to a public meeting to consider the nomination.” Notice of the hearing is also required to be published in a newspaper of general circulation and posted at locations within the proposed district. *See* Phila. Code § 14-1004(2)(b). The nomination proposes to designate the SHHD as a whole; however, property owners located in the so-called southwest, northeast and northwest quadrants have not been provided with the requisite notice of the hearing, nor been made aware of how their respective properties relate to the character of the proposed district through, history, architecture, design or plan. Therefore, the Commission’s consideration of the SHHD through the partial SE Quadrant nomination violates the Philadelphia Code and fundamental rights of due process guaranteed by the Pennsylvania and United States Constitutions.

SHCA prioritizes relieving the purported administrative burden that would be imposed on the Commission’s staff “reviewing nearly 2,000 properties in a single nomination” above the fundamental due process rights of thousands of taxpaying property owners. This disjointed approach denies owners of properties within the SE Quadrant the ability to assess the context, merits and basis of the proposed district as a whole by reviewing and assessing the complete inventory required by the Commission’s Rules and Regulations. Likewise, the partial nomination is highly prejudicial to property owners within the other three quadrants not presently under consideration. A determination that the SHHD meets the criteria for designation based solely on the merits of the SE Quadrant would impermissibly predetermine the merits of the district, without consideration of the remaining quadrants and without affording property owners within those quadrants with an opportunity to challenge the basis and merits of the district as a whole.

It should be axiomatic that any potential administrative burden on the Commission’s staff due to the size of the proposed district does not outweigh the fundamental due process rights of property owners to have a full, fair and complete hearing on the merits of the proposed district. It appears that the nominator’s concern for the administrative burden on the PHC staff is merely pretext and that SHCA’s true motivation is to prematurely halt or slow the demolition, alteration or construction of any building or structure within the SE Quadrant during the pendency of the Commission’s consideration of the nomination. *See* Phila. Code § 14-1005(6)(f) (prohibiting the issuance of building permits for buildings located within a district being considered by the Commission for designation.) In the nominator and staff’s rush to halt development within the SE Quadrant, they have bulldozed over the Constitutional due process and property rights of the citizens and property owners located within the proposed district.

In light of the foregoing, my clients and I strenuously object to the Commission's consideration of the SHHD – SE Quadrant nomination until such time as a complete nomination of the proposed Spruce Hill historic district is accepted by the Commission, inclusive of a detailed inventory of every property as required by Rule 5.7.c. I further demand that the Commission and/or City of Philadelphia Law Department: (i) confirm that the SHHD – SE Quadrant nomination is incomplete; (ii) return the nomination to the staff with the instruction to not forward the nomination to the Committee or Commission until such time as a complete inventory is submitted; and (iii) confirm that the Commission lacks jurisdiction over the properties within the SE Quadrant until such time as a complete nomination is accepted by the Commission.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

*Michael V. Phillips*  
Michael V. Phillips

cc: Leonard F. Reuter, Esq.

## Kim Chantry

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**From:** Libby Rosof <libbyrosof@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 7, 2024 5:24 PM  
**To:** preservation  
**Cc:** Jenine Sanzari  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District (Southeast Quadrant)

**External Email Notice. This email comes from outside of City government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.**

Gentlepeople:

I am writing in favor of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District (Southeast Quadrant). I have lived in the district for more than 50 years and brought up my family here. The signature architecture of the neighborhood makes for an unusual amount of community interaction and togetherness, while providing housing for diversity of people and incomes. In the past few years, however, many of these houses have been destroyed by shameful developers with no respect for the current residents and the historic architecture, those developers sometimes forcing long-timers and families out of their homes and undermining the integrity of neighboring houses, while crowding the visual landscape with behemoth apartment blocks. The lack of protections for the livability of the neighborhood is discouraging. I believe the Historic District designation will help slow down this destruction.

Libby Rosof

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libby rososof

Board of Directors, and co-founder, [theartblog.org](http://theartblog.org)

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## Kim Chantry

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**From:** David Brubaker <david.brubaker@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2024 5:59 AM  
**To:** preservation  
**Subject:** Support for the Spruce Hill Historic District Nomination

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Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District. As a proud homeowner on the 4200 block of Pine Street, I have firsthand experience of the vibrancy, uniqueness, and rich historical nature that defines our neighborhood. This area not only represents a significant chapter in Philadelphia's storied past but also continues to be a living, breathing community where history and modernity blend seamlessly.

The designation of Spruce Hill as a Historic District is crucial in ensuring that the architectural integrity and aesthetic charm of our neighborhood are preserved amidst rapid urban development. It will provide a necessary safeguard against changes that might compromise the unique character that we, as residents, cherish deeply.

Preserving Spruce Hill's historical essence will also enhance our community's quality of life, maintain property values, and promote a sense of pride and belonging among its residents. It is an investment in our collective identity and future generations.

I trust that the Philadelphia Historical Commission will recognize the importance of this nomination and act in favor of protecting the vibrant and historical nature of Spruce Hill. Thank you for considering my perspective as both a homeowner and a passionate advocate for the preservation of our neighborhood's heritage.

Sincerely,

David Brubaker  
4234 Pine St

## Kim Chantry

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**From:** Marta Bartholomew <marta.bartholomew@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2024 11:17 AM  
**To:** preservation  
**Subject:** Resident support of Spruce Hill historical preservation

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Dear Mr. Farnham,

As a young person in my 20s and working at Penn I would spend many of my lunch hours walking and wandering around the Spruce Hill neighborhood, enjoying its lovely architecture and natural beauty. I imagined that one day I might live there and raise a family. In 2016 I realized that dream and bought a fixer upper on Osage Avenue and have spent the last eight years slowly making improvements and repairs that complement the personality of the neighborhood.

Many of the aspects that I love about Spruce Hill will be protected by historical designation. Our community is strong and much of that is owed to its unique history and beauty that has stood the test of time. We need to preserve this for the future generations as the bedrock of a solid community. Neighbors will work together to support the needs of a historical designation.

I hope that we can all recognize what makes Philadelphia special – our neighborhoods and communities have real personality built through history – the neighborhoods are not generic and anonymous. We need to support and preserve that as a primary reason people choose to live in Philly.

I am an enthusiastic supporter of the historic designation. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and all of your hard work.

Best,  
Marta

Marta Bartholomew, MBA (she/her)  
Director of Research Programs and Communications  
Office of the Vice Provost for Research (OVPR)

Director of Postdoctoral Affairs  
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA)  
<https://postdocs.upenn.edu>

University of Pennsylvania  
1 College Hall, Suite G08  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
Mobile: (215) 834-4446  
<https://research.upenn.edu/>

## Kim Chantry

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**From:** Mary Berzinsky <mberzinsky@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2024 10:17 PM  
**To:** preservation  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District (Southeast Quadrant) nomination

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My husband and I have lived in University City Spruce Hill Community for 32 years in the same house. As an architect and interior designer we care about what our neighborhood and the buildings in our community are taken care of properly. Restoration and maintenance is very important. We are in support of the historic nomination.

Mary and Greg Berzinsky

**Mary Ryan Berzinsky**  
Interior Designer, NCIDQ

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215 704 4201  
[mberzinsky@gmail.com](mailto:mberzinsky@gmail.com)  
Connect on [LinkedIn](#)



## Kim Chantry

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**From:** Katherine Dowdell <kdowdell@farragutstreet.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2024 3:29 PM  
**To:** preservation  
**Cc:** Amy Lambert; Paul Steinke; Hanna Stark  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District

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I am writing to express my full support for the designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District. This neighborhood clearly meets many of the criteria for designation, and is long overdue for such recognition and protection.

Thank you - Kathy Dowdell

## Kim Chantry

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**From:** preservation  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 6:25 AM  
**To:** Kim Chantry  
**Subject:** Fwd: Spruce Hill Historic District (Southeast Quadrant) nomination

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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**From:** Greg And Mary Berzinsky <berzinsky@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 11, 2024 10:18 PM  
**To:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District (Southeast Quadrant) nomination

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My wife and I have lived in University City Spruce Hill area for almost 32 years in the same house. We support the historic nomination.

Greg and Mary Berzinsky  
4205 Pine Street

## Kim Chantry

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**From:** Email Verification <Waynesautoservice@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 10:40 AM  
**To:** preservation  
**Subject:** Re: Why it should be preserved

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Here is the information.  
University city

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**From:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 10:35 AM  
**To:** Email Verification <Waynesautoservice@outlook.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Why it should be preserved

Hi Wayne,  
Thank you for your email. Can you please let us know the neighborhood you are referencing?

Thanks,  
Laura

Laura DiPasquale  
**Historic Preservation Planner Supervisor**  
**Philadelphia Historical Commission**  
**preservation@phila.gov**

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**From:** Email Verification <Waynesautoservice@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 8:00 AM  
**To:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>  
**Subject:** Why it should be preserved

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This area is historical and should remain that way. There is too many new structures which is destroying the neighborhood.

Wayne Fleishman



Becca Geller-Puchalsky: President  
267-261-2030  
[rebeccagellerpuchalsky@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccagellerpuchalsky@gmail.com)

457 South 45th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

April 14, 20

Re: Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant  
CDH Hearing: April 17, 2024  
PHC Hearing: May 10, 2024

Jon Farnham, Executive Director  
Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Dr. Farnham,

The Board of the Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA) is looking forward to the upcoming PHC public meetings where the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant nomination will be reviewed for inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. We initiated community engagement on this topic during our monthly Board meeting in November 2022 (open to the public) with an educational panel discussion on what it means to be designated a historic district. The panel included Kim Chantry (PHC), Paul Steinke (Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia), Amy Lambert (University City Historical Society), and Thaddeus Squire (Member of Overbrook Farms HD). Over the past year, SHCA has provided monthly updates to the Spruce Hill community on the historic district nomination process, included extensive FAQ sheet on our website, set up table top displays and distributed flyers at the Clark Park Farmer's Market, Baltimore Avenue Dollar Stroll event, and 2023 MayFair event, conducted 3 public forums focused on the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District consisting of Q&A with panelists from UCHS, PHC, and neighboring historic districts, and continue to engage neighbors and local business owners on the topic.

As you can see, we are extremely passionate about educating and engaging the community on historic preservation in Spruce Hill, with the goal of adding a layer of protection of the historic homes and structures. We firmly believe that the preservation of our architectural heritage is essential for maintaining the character and identity of our community.

Spruce Hill is a unique and significant cultural landscape that embodies the rich history and heritage of Philadelphia. Its well-preserved buildings, streetscapes, and landmarks tell the story of West Philadelphia's development and evolution over time. From its architectural diversity to its association with important historical events or figures, the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District holds immense cultural and educational value for residents and visitors alike.

By designating Spruce Hill as a historic district, we can ensure its protection and stewardship for future generations. This recognition will not only celebrate our past but also provide benefits by advancing heritage curiosity, fostering community pride, and potentially enhancing property values.

If included in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, SHCA is committed to continuing to explore and access valuable resources and incentives for preservation efforts, such as grants, tax credits, and technical assistance. These resources are crucial for supporting rehabilitation projects and maintaining the integrity of our historic built environment.

Preserving our cultural heritage is a responsibility that we owe to future generations, and designation as a historic district is a meaningful step towards fulfilling that obligation.

We are aware that a letter on behalf of Campus Apartments LLC, UC Housing, and "numerous other owners of real property" suggests our nomination is "incomplete insofar as it does not include a full and complete inventory of the proposed district" (Phillips, 4/5/24). We have been clear about the inventories up for nomination since we began in November of 2022. The inventory is complete for the Southeast Quadrant of Spruce Hill neighborhood. The proposed district does not cover all of the Spruce Hill neighborhood because the inventory is extremely large. This strategy to divide the neighborhood into quadrants was negotiated with the PHC in 2022 to address SHCA capacity to engage neighbors and fundraise. With nearly 2,000 properties in the entire neighborhood, creating a more manageable designation strategy benefits the PHC, SHCA, and all affected residents. This intentional and advised strategy in no way suggests our current Southeast Quadrant application is "incomplete and unripe" (Phillips, 4/5/24). We guarantee that our application is complete, ripe, and backed by countless eager supporters.

Thank you for your consideration and review. If you require any additional information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the SHCA Board.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BGPuchalsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Becca Geller-Puchalsky on behalf of the Spruce Hill Community Association Board

April 15, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant, to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. As a resident of this vibrant neighborhood for nearly five years, I have developed a deep appreciation for its rich history, diverse architectural styles, and unique community character.

Arriving at Penn in 2017, I strayed from a required graduate admissions tour and explored Spruce Hill. I remember a distinct feeling of wonderment and awe at first seeing the vast array of historic homes, parks, and streetscapes. I also remember being shocked to learn that few of its buildings were historically protected. Having moved from the Midwest, where anything older than one hundred years was almost automatically appreciated and protected, this was, to me, unfathomable.

Indeed, the urgency of this designation effort cannot be overstated. Even in my somewhat shore tenure in Spruce Hill, I've witnessed an exponential increase in the number of demolitions and changes in the streets near my home. Undeniably, change is not inherently negative; rather, historic district designation is about *managing change thoughtfully*. It allows neighborhoods to evolve while safeguarding their unique character, architectural heritage, and cultural traditions.

Having studied and worked extensively in the fields of architecture and historic preservation, including my role as a Senior Research Associate at the Urban Heritage Project at the University of Pennsylvania, I have witnessed firsthand the value and significance of preserving our built environment holistically. The Spruce Hill neighborhood stands as a testament to the early development of streetcar suburbs and boasts one of the largest collections of Victorian-era housing in the nation.

Moreover, as a neighborhood near major universities, Spruce Hill experiences unique challenges and opportunities related to housing and development. Historic district designation can incentivize responsible development, promote human-scale density, and contribute to economic strength and environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that designating Spruce Hill as a Historic District is a vital step in preserving our community's heritage, fostering economic resilience, and promoting a diverse and inclusive neighborhood. I urge you to support this nomination and help ensure a vibrant future for Spruce Hill and its residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jacob W. Torkelson, MSHP, Affil. ASLA  
Senior Research Associate  
Department of Historic Preservation  
Stuart Weitzman School of Design



April 15, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the University City Historical Society, I would like to express our strongest support for the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

UCHS has been enthusiastically supporting the Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA) in their efforts to designate the neighborhood historic since 1987, when the first of three nomination efforts was undertaken. The baton was picked up again in 2022 with the most robust consensus yet among community members.

Spruce Hill is one of the most intact and early Victorian streetcar suburbs in the nation; its significance is irrefutable. In recent years, however, the district has recently been in the crosshairs of an onslaught of development that has demolished large swaths of the neighborhood's edges. The resulting development has destroyed the human scale of the neighborhood. Designation seeks to better manage the inevitable change that will continue to arrive in Spruce Hill, prioritizing people over profit.

Spruce Hill contains historic resources that narrate a prior era's successful attempts at both speculative and transit-oriented development. The wide variety of housing types – from rowhouses to large twins to 1920s-era apartments – provide housing to a wide variety of residents, a huge part of what makes the neighborhood inclusive and vibrant. Porches, adaptively reused garages or banks, and verdant sidewalks facilitate community gathering and allow small businesses to flourish.

UCHS is proud to be a neighborhood resource on preservation matters in West Philadelphia. Thank you for supporting historic designation for Spruce Hill.

Yours Truly,

Amy Lambert  
President of the Board of Governors  
University City Historical Society

CC: Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, Philadelphia's 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
State Representative Rick Krajewski, Pennsylvania's 188<sup>th</sup> District

**From:** [Angela Kent](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Spruce Hill Historic District  
**Date:** Monday, April 15, 2024 2:00:49 PM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)  
[image.png](#)

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Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

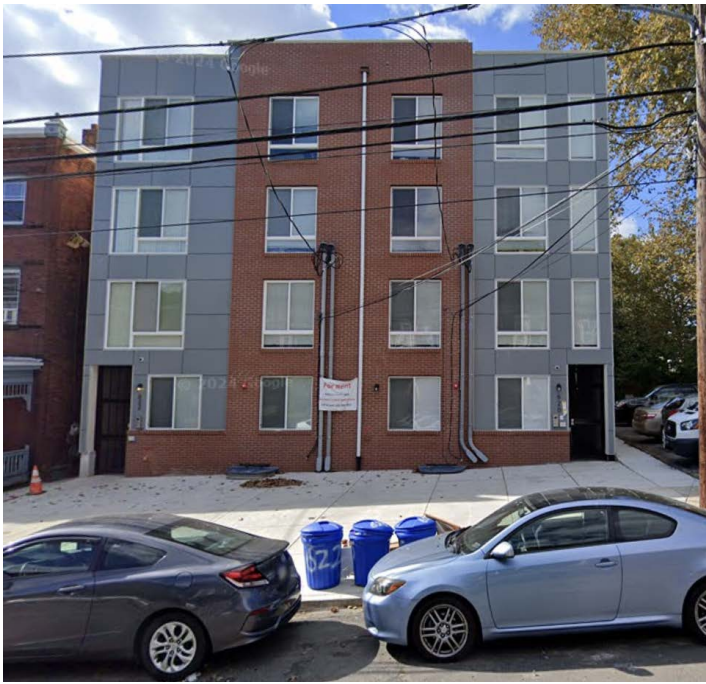
I am writing in support of the Spruce Hill Historic District. My husband and I purchased our first home in Spruce Hill ten years ago and then became a part of the Chester-Regent Historic District. We are very proud and honored to live in such a beautiful, historic place. It gives me great comfort and joy to know that our home and block will be appreciated by current and future generations. I hope the same for all of Spruce Hill.

When we were first looking to purchase a home in the neighborhood, there was another house we were very much interested in on S. 42nd street. It had the most lovely historic details, both inside and out, and I photographed it at the time. We ended up purchasing a different home, and since then, that house on 42nd street has been demolished. I remember the day it came down, I felt devastated knowing we would have been able to save it had we become the owners. Or that it might have been saved had the previous nomination for Spruce Hill not been stalled. That was when I knew I wanted to be involved in the preservation of this neighborhood and recognized the urgent pace at which developers are removing historic properties and changing what we love most about this special place.

A before and after of the house and green space. 622 S. 42nd St.







Sincerely,

Angela Kent, NCIDQ

(410) 279-1087

Pronouns: she/her

**From:** [Andrew Figueiredo](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** (Nuanced) Constituent Opposition to Spruce Hill Historic District Designation  
**Date:** Monday, April 15, 2024 8:54:18 PM

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Good evening,

My name is Andrew Figueiredo and I reside at 4300 Spruce St., Apt. A402, Philadelphia, PA 19104. I write today in my personal capacity as a Spruce Hill resident to oppose the historic designation proposed for the Spruce Hill neighborhood. I do share some of the concerns proponents of this designation have about developers who lack respect for adjacent historic properties, an egregious example of which has unfolded on 45th Street across from Clark Park. Something needs to be done to protect and preserve the heritage and character of the neighborhood. In my mind, that's why we have individual historic designations for certain buildings. That could and should be expanded.

However, I worry that a historic designation for the entire neighborhood is inadvisable due to the neighborhood's renter-heavy population. Spruce Hill's vibrance comes not just from the gorgeous architecture, but from its eclectic mix of students, artsy individuals, young families, and small businesses. Many residents live on middle-class incomes and have been adversely impacted by skyrocketing rents. Our neighborhood is not a museum; it's a living, breathing community that should welcome more people.

Supply and demand teaches us that the way to keep rents lower in Spruce Hill is to build *more*, not less. Yet NIMBYs often weaponize historic designations are [often](#) as a veto point to prevent construction of new units. Sweeping historic designations give regressive NIMBYs ammunition to halt development entirely. Putting a stop to the expansion of the housing supply would price out the people who make this neighborhood what it is today, putting at risk its welcoming spirit and inclusivity. Please do not pit preservation and construction against each other--we need both. We can protect individual historic properties without stymying development across Spruce Hill.

Thank you,  
Andrew

**From:** [LiLing Choing](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** 4208-30 Chester Avenue Historic District, 4204 Chester Ave  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 10:47:04 AM

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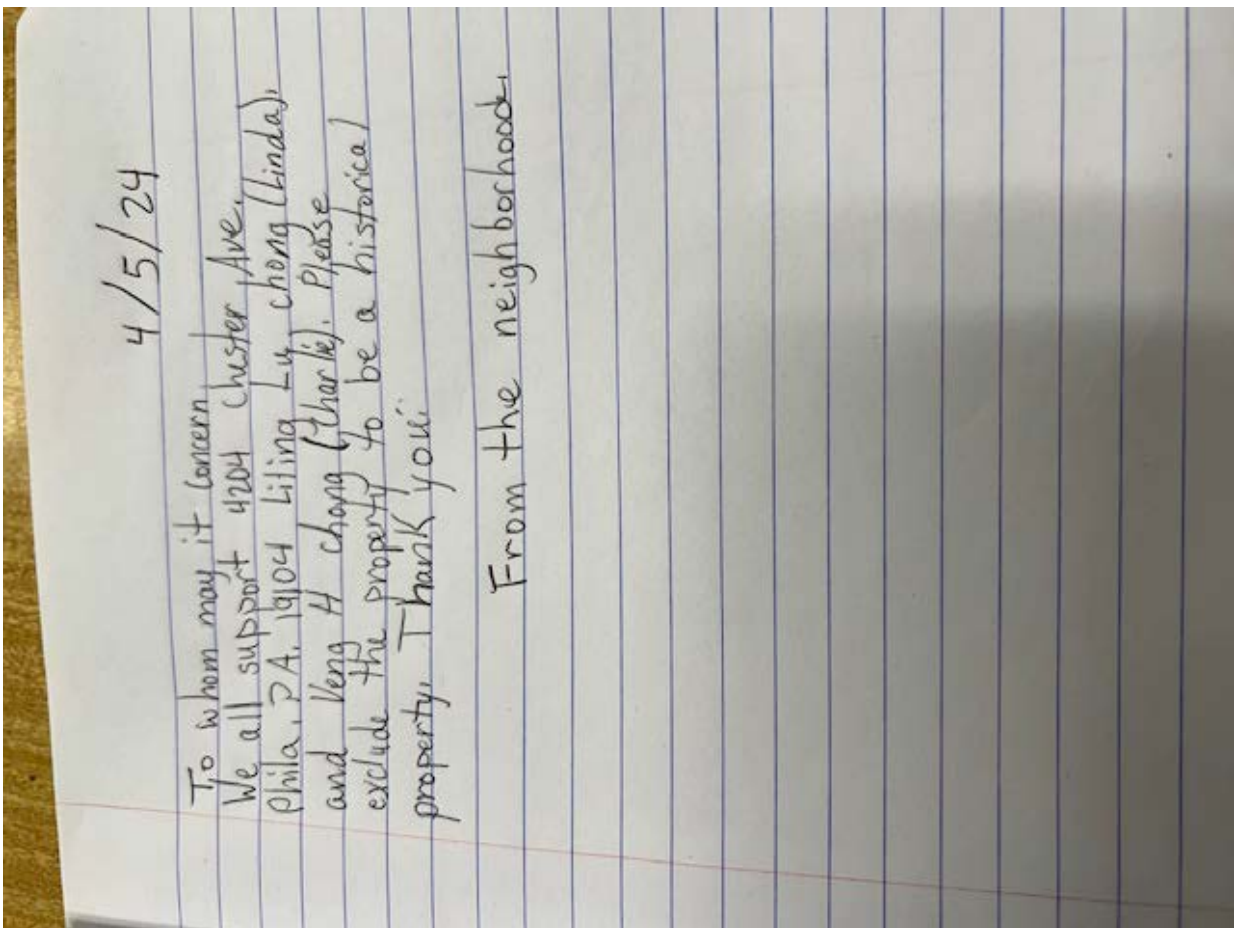
To whom it may concern:

We are writing to inform you that we would like to have 4204 Chester, Philadelphia PA 19104 excluded from the Historical Commissions Regulation.

Attached are pictures of signatures, references, support with names and contact information from the various members of our community who support us in this decision.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to to joining the Committee of Historical Designation call on 4/17 at 9:30am.

Best,  
Linda and Charlie  
Five Star Deli



Making 4204 Chester Ave a historical building would be an ~~undue hardship~~ ~~handship~~ for the small ~~business owners~~ ~~owners~~

- (1) Amie Sanders Please do not qualify the building.  
4239 Baltimore Ave  
Phila- PA 19104  
(215) 370-2764
- (2) ~~Maury~~ We don't like 4204 Chester Ave to be historical. It's not quality. ~~we can't~~ ~~we can't~~ ~~we can't~~  
4204 3rd floor ~~we can't~~ ~~we can't~~ ~~we can't~~
- (3) Maya: I would not like to be a historical landmark. I love this store. (267) 769-4138 (corner street)
- (4) Kueguy ~~1114~~ ~~1114~~ ~~1114~~ (215) 571-9173  
465 S. 41st St. Phila. PA. 19143
- (5) Shareff Jackson 267 730 0147 (P)  
4210 Chester av Phila PA 19104  
It's a staple of the neighborhood, and ~~it's~~ very nice store.
- (6) Jonathan Capor 215-980-8198  
4218 Chester Ave Apt. 5  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
This is a wonder for space and a necessity in the neighborhood.



(7) Gabriel West 215-834-6012 (1)  
506 S. 41<sup>st</sup> St, Philly PA 19104  
- A ridiculous an unnecessary burden,  
don't do this to regular people  
If you want historic status  
PAY Linda & Charlie COMPENSATE  
don't dictate.

(8) Jadelyn Watkins 509 S 42<sup>nd</sup> St.

ASHPEN WHITE 523-SOUTH  
42<sup>nd</sup> St

267-732-83-80

Rajesh Kumar Singh, 4207, Apt. 104 (4)

(9) 4205 Chester Avenue Apt 402 (2)

Hannah Bengel

516-406-6478

It would make the process of  
filing a small business difficult  
~~XXXX~~

(0)

10 Laura Fernandez 2-14-24  
4205 Chester Ave. (11)  
Apt. 405  
(215) 738-9960

(11) This store is an important  
small business in our neighborhood.  
It should be a single step  
process for them to be NO  
registered historic site.

Thank you,  
L. Fernandez (21)

(12) DAVID BYRO (21)  
611 S. 42ND ST.  
856-309-5659

AS A CUSTOMER OF FIVE STAR  
DELI, I WANT TO COMMENT  
THAT A HISTORICAL DESIGNATION  
WOULD NOT BENEFIT ALL SMALL  
BUSINESS OWNERS IN THE AREA

(13) Zachary Johnson  
4207 Chester Ave  
202-306-0189

(14) in support of the convenience store  
-4124 Chester Ave  
Krisztopherschumann  
krisztopherschumann.20@gmail.com  
itankara15@gmail.com  
Ibrahim Tankara

~~207-34~~

(15) (215) 341-1100  
Rob

(16) 555 South <sup>4<sup>th</sup></sup> St

(17) Stephanie M. 19104  
4943 Chester Ave  
Phila PA 19143  
484 425 3124

(18) Mackenzie Eltine  
1734 monument st  
215-776-7269

(19) Lisa Lu  
4206 3rd Floor  
Phone 267-535-1050

(20) Johny 267-535-1050  
Sarah 215-435-0781  
Love this store

(21) Hannah Harvey  
555 S 43rd St  
215 685 7529  
very nice store!

(22) Richard Procel Jr  
215-908-9469  
6416 Akron St  
RP



(25) Damian Hammond (25)  
417-310-5020

Great selection and prices  
42nd St

(26) Ken Dixon (15)

267-338-6641  
Great service

(27) Lawrence Seels (15)

215-725-3455  
great Service (Nice Personality) 15  
2660 N. 31. St

(28) Collins, Isaac (25)

641 So YEWDELL  
215-3817035

(29) Charlese House (25)

1609 S. 60th St  
267 8790830

so convient and affordable  
Please do not is histunal. Hardship for  
the owner

- (41) Haven Kielbka  
973-747-2520
- (41) 4204 Chester Ave 3rd floor  
Vimal Bheem
- (42) 609-676-1999  
1217 S 46th St
- (43) Brandon Chin  
(956) 779-1100  
620 S 42nd
- (44) Ian Glass  
445-998-2214  
6205 42nd Street
- (45) Ricardo Rodriguez  
4129 Woodland Ave  
610-299-1245
- (46) De Yang Lu  
4204 Chester Ave 2nd Floor  
(215) 538-9397
- (47) Chris Chung  
4204 Chester Ave 3rd Floor  
(215) 833-6439
- (48) Kristy Chung  
4204 Chester Ave 3rd Floor  
(215) 927-1364

- (49) Chau
- (50)
- (51)
- (52)
- (53)
- (54)

(30) Edeci McFadden  
8030 Mickener Avenue  
Phila, PA 19150

(31) Health Center #5  
267-498-8708  
My lunch spot in an area there  
are not alot of stores. Very needed  
for access to food in area.

(32) Ethna Smith  
4607 Chester Ave  
Phila Pa 19104  
565-990-0814

(33) Harold Battista  
4209 Chester Ave #B11  
561-234-9834

(34) BILL ALEXANDER  
4213 BALTIMORE  
PHILA. PA 19104  
215-677-1733



(55) Samantha M Monroe  
4208 Chester 19107  
267 648 9590

(56) Haleigh Bunting  
1926 S. Bowie  
604-332-1974

(57) John Thomas  
607 S 42nd St  
267-206-7557

(58) Reginald Gayle  
4224 Baltimore Ave  
610 772 4997

(59) George McHale  
4224 Baltimore Ave  
267-262-4067

(60) Brian Stewart  
4209 Chester Ave Blb  
215-680-2252

- (41) Haven Kielbka  
973-747-2520
- (41) 4204 Chester Ave 3rd floor  
Vimal Bheem
- (42) 609-676-1999  
1217 S 46th St
- (43) Brendon Chin  
(956) 779-1100  
620 S 42nd
- (44) Ian Glass  
445-998-2244  
6205 42nd Street
- (45) Ricardo Rodriguez  
4129 Woodland Ave  
610-299-1245
- (46) De Yang Lu  
4204 Chester Ave 2nd Floor  
(215) 538-9397
- (47) Chris Chung  
4204 Chester Ave 3rd Floor  
(215) 833-6439
- (48) Kristy Chung  
4204 Chester Ave 3rd Floor  
(215) 927-1364

- (49) Chau
- (50)
- (51)
- (52)
- (53)
- (54)

73 Cole Schaffer  
856-630-5062

74 Stefan Filipovski  
970-972-9104  
4209 Chester Ave

75 Geri Paige  
(215) 222-5568  
4107 Chester Ave.

76 VAN Crawley  
215-688-3031  
2607 N 23rd St

77 Alice Ascher  
4107 Chester Ave B-1  
Phila PA 19104

78 Chae Rouse  
4209 Chester Ave  
Phila Pa 19104  
215 454-7190



(79) Kendall Utley  
4209 Chester Ave  
570-561-5890

(80) Malik Bright  
4203 Chester Ave  
610-304-9777

(81) Sammy Rivera  
4219 Baltimore Ave  
732-948-3835

(82) Pooja Philip  
4212 Chester Ave  
484-678-6428

(83) Jesse Dewald  
4203 Chester Ave Apt 2B  
412-818-9342

(84) ~~Alexa~~ Alexander Boyd  
4107 Chester Ave Apt 1-A  
215-382-3679

85 Tyler Jones  
4215 Chester Ave  
484-547-1232

OP

IP

86 Alphonse Hill  
4203 Chester Ave  
1267-504-1427  
David Gordon  
1232-S Willville St  
267-770-3015

SP

87 Barbara Warnock  
4223 Regent Sq.  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215)-964-4078

signage for the store is not retained  
modern store-front;  
store does not retain  
original appearance in  
any case.

88 Tobias Brown  
4228 Chester Ave #1F  
267-496-4717

89 Tyler Fankin  
4205 Chester Ave



(90) Raphael Rivera  
537 S 42nd St  
215-917-6787

(91) Bradley Teaira  
4207 Chester Ave. Apt. 206  
(267) 271-2341

(92) Jennifer Wyse  
4205 Chester Ave. Apt. 406  
(757) 374-9786

(93) KEVRA LYONS  
4124 Chester Ave Apt 2M  
kevelry@proton.me

(94) VANESA JACKSON  
~~#5~~ SJU  
2150765

(95) SHARICA HARRIS  
267-650-8152

(96)

Michael Permutathil  
443-942-7070  
4105 Spruce St

Jerome Gallman  
215-789-1071  
4207 Chester Ave., 102

Gladys Thomas  
215-251-7738  
4207 Chester Ave. 102

Jameson Cooper - Jameson.L.Cooper@gmail.com  
267-816-1281  
4207 Chester Ave. 102

Monica Withers  
506 S 41<sup>st</sup> St Apt LJ  
Philadelphia, PA 19104 monicaalise@hotmail.com  
267-978-2022

(66) Joshua Morris  
4224 Chester Ave  
617-704-7565

(67) Imani Curtis  
6025 Bliss Ave  
215-594-5532

(68) Deja Paines  
4228 Chester Ave  
315-430-8120

(69) Myron James  
1232 S. 51 St.  
267-678-9587

(70) Jeffrey Sessoms

(71) 4510 Nehemiah camp  
267-495-9321

(72) Delfine Brown  
215-475-1646  
AMEEN BEYAH  
(267) 249-7467



(61) Deborah Walker  
4525 Kingsessing Apt #1  
Phila, Pa. 19143  
215-779-7643

(62) Manra Okoefe  
516 S 42nd St (B)  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
908-967-2402

(63) Michael Grandson  
523 S 42nd St Philadelphia Pa 19104  
485-237-5423

(64) Cosmere Tuck  
1207 Chester ave  
215-618-6506

(65) Loren T. Bussay  
91 Buena Vista Drive  
New Castle DE 19720  
610 726 4057

**From:** [Allison Thayer](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** 4204 Chester Ave Historical Designation  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 12:51:29 PM

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To whom it may concern,

Please exclude 4204 Chester Avenue, the home of 5 Star Deli, from the proposed historical designation. The long-time owners Ms. Lina and Mr. Charlie tirelessly serve their community and provide fresh food and household items in an area where affordable resources are in short supply. Additionally, the store is a meeting spot for conversation and social safety for long-time and elder residents of the neighborhood. Construction or modification to the building could cause the owners and neighbors undue hardship, and the historical designation would not be benefit the local and permanent residents of our neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Allison Thayer  
1129 S 46th Street

**From:** [Vivian Ng](#)  
**To:** [preservation: Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 1:36:07 PM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Vivian Ng  
4505 Spruce St, Philadelphia, PA 19139

**From:** [Chris Kucewicz](#)  
**To:** [preservation: Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 2:52:29 PM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Best regards,

Chris Kucewicz  
221 S. 51st St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19139



**From:** [Leo Wagner](#)  
**To:** [preservation: %20jamie.gauthier@phila.gov](mailto:jamie.gauthier@phila.gov)  
**Subject:** No Historic District in Spruce Hill  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 1:13:34 PM

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Leo Wagner, I am a student of urban planning, a resident of the same Spruce Hill home for three years, a voter, and a renter. I urge Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC), and local leaders to **reject** the [proposed Spruce Hill historic district, southeast quadrant](#). Instead, I urge leaders to support individual designation to achieve a balance between preservation and development. Spruce Hill is a historic neighborhood, but it is also, **whether SHCA likes it or not, a neighborhood of renters**. Renters are integral to the vitality of the community, and many are attracted to Spruce Hill precisely because of its affordable rental housing in addition to its amenities and accessibility.

This historic district **will harm district residents, the neighborhood and the city:**

- It will make **home repairs more complicated, expensive and time-intensive**
  - PHC review can add months to a home renovation project, and the PHC can arbitrarily deny modifications to a property without any way for property owners to appeal
- It will **raise rents and home prices** by **restricting the supply of new housing**
  - Preventing the construction of new homes will reduce affordability, accelerate gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the public Sadie Alexander - Penn Partnership public elementary school.
- It will **burden small business owners** and **limit new retail businesses** from modifying buildings to fit their business.

The Historic Register **already protects** many properties in Spruce Hill.

- Nearly 200 properties in the proposed historic district are **already** on the Historic Register.
- Continued individual designation can protect the most historically significant properties while allowing more residents to share in this amenity-rich neighborhood and lowering the cost of maintaining historic properties

The goal of this historic district seems to be blocking development, and preventing additional renters from living in the neighborhood. Renters, such as myself, care about the community and contribute to the neighborhood's civic life, economy, and more. We want to be able to stay and thrive in the neighborhood, which a historic district will impede.

Sincerely,

Leo Wagner  
4222 Baltimore Avenue, 1F  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

**From:** [David](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant  
**Date:** Tuesday, April 16, 2024 3:11:41 PM

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April 16, 2024

*From:*  
*Save Our Sites*  
*2005 Cambridge Street*  
*Philadelphia, PA 19130*

*To: The Designation Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission*

*Re: Designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant*

Save Our Sites wholeheartedly supports the designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant. The overall district, comprised of four quadrants, possesses a collection of Victorian residential structures unsurpassed in quantity and quality in the entire United States. The preservation of this invaluable collection is so important in maintaining and enhancing the livability of our Philadelphia community. Without question, increased livability for any city, ultimately results in needed economic benefit.

From a practical perspective, the division of the larger district into four discrete quadrants is very logical and appropriate. This division, enables all parties involved to address matters of concern, with respect to the designation of each quadrant, in a time-saving, orderly and fair manner.

Again, Save Our Sites supports the designation of the Southeast Quadrant of the Spruce Hill Historic District, and looks forward to the eventual nomination and designation of the other three quadrants.

David S. Traub, AIA Emeritus  
Co-Founder of Save Our Sites  
2005 Cambridge Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
davidstraub@verizon.net  
215-915-6627



Virus-free. [www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

**From:** [A Mullin](#)  
**To:** [preservation: Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 12:57:06 PM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Anna Mullin  
312 n 39th St  
Philadelphia PA  
19104

**From:** [Anthony West](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#); [Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic District will enhance affordability  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 8:10:32 AM

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Designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant is a key to maintaining our community's affordability and diversity..

Preserving and protecting older housing costs much less than demolishing and replacing it. That is a fact of life in Spruce Hill, where gentrification is being driven largely by new construction today. Our distinctive historic architecture, in contrast, is well suited to accommodate the wide range of incomes we have long found here. It creates diversity, not gentrification.

Appropriate subsidies exist for low-income home repairs under Historic Designation. These programs should be reviewed and extended as needed by municipal officials for a fraction of the cost of new housing. Civic leaders can spread information on this assistance and maximize access to it.

Tony West  
503 S. 44th St.

**From:** [Gail Massey](#)  
**To:** [Jamie Gauthier](#); [preservation](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Support the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 9:48:22 PM

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I live in Cedar Park, but Spruce Hill is a lovely area to stroll through and enjoy the amenities. The idea of developers demolishing the beautiful homes and putting up bare bones apartments so they can get more rent money is deplorable.

This is happening in other areas of the city also.

There are plenty of beyond hope houses and vacant land where these developers could do some good.

Why should anyone visit this area if it is cookie cutter apartments?

Spruce Hill (and much of Philadelphia ) must be preserved!

Thank you!

Gail Massey



**From:** [Becca Geller-Puchalsky](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** supporting the SHCA nomination  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 5:41:12 AM

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Good morning,

I have been a resident of Spruce Hill since 2012. It has been a joy to live here in my 20s and now raise my family here. We deeply value the porches where we can talk and hang out with friends/neighbors. We value the extensive tree canopy. We value the diversity of residents. I am in strong support of this nomination.

Becca Geller-Puchalsky

**From:** [Bill Russell](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** Supporting the Spruce Hill historic nomination  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 3:43:14 PM

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Hi -

I am reaching out because I am a resident of Spruce Hill, and wanted to voice my support for the historic designation.

As a former renter and now homeowner, I have experienced the stark divide between homes owned by local residents vs. corporate landlords who are seeking to profit off of our community. My former rental was an incredible building that has even been featured in architecture books about Philadelphia. I gradually watched the unit decline to the point I felt it was unsafe to live there any longer.

I do not want to stand by and watch these great historic buildings crumble under derelict management. I think this historical designation will help preserve the rich architectural context in Spruce Hill that is worthy of respect and continued investment.

Thank you,  
Bill Russell

**From:** [GERALDIN PAIGE](#)  
**To:** [preservation](#)  
**Subject:** The property of Veng and LiLing Choing  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 2:43:30 AM

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I am writing to you on behalf of Veng and LiLing Choing, the owners of Five Star Deli at 4204 Chester Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Choing were recently informed that their property is under consideration for being designated as a historic site. However, the Historical Commission reviewed their property on May 25, 2022 and excluded it from such a designation.

Mr. and Mrs. Choing have faithfully supported this community for over 20 years. To me and many others in this area, these wonderful people are far more than owners of a small store; their kindness, generosity, and friendship have endeared Veng and LiLing to countless people over the years, and for many of us, they are parts of our extended families.

Veng and LiLing are not only an important part of our community due to the services they provide, but they have been caring and loving members who never hesitate to lend a helping hand to those in need. I am deeply concerned about the financial burden that Mr. and Mrs. Choing will endure if their property is labeled as a historic site. The extra costs associated with this designation will create an undue financial hardship for them and their family. It is for this reason that I ask you to exclude their property as a historic site.

Sincerely,  
Geraldine Paige

**From:** [Leonard Bonarek](#)  
**To:** [Jamie Gauthier](#); [preservation](#)  
**Cc:** [Garden Court Zoning](#); [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](#)  
**Subject:** I Wholeheartedly Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 17, 2024 10:38:08 AM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

I was born and raised in Takoma Park, Maryland, a community that (I believe with the best intentions) was an early adopter of historic designation for neighborhoods. Today, Takoma Park is one of the most expensive places to live in the DC area, an area known for its lack of housing affordability.

I'll speak plainly: I make \$95,000 and I can't afford housing in my hometown. Even if I could afford to return, my community no longer exists, having seen 100% turnover since my childhood. The community that replaced it is far less diverse, far wealthier, and apparently has persistent turnover. In my childhood, it was rare for a house to be sold and for a new neighbor to arrive. Today there are "for sale" signs all around my old neighborhood.

Here and now in Philly, market forces and local policy choices are already sending Garden Court and Spruce Hill in this direction, and it is very concerning to me. Looking at current valuations and property tax rate in my neighborhood, I'm not sure that I will be able to afford to stay in my modest home without subdividing it, even though I make over double the median income for our city. This is a deeply troubling pattern as my case is far from unique.

Designating a historic district absent rezoning to allow for more density is a policy choice that will have disastrous results by every metric except home valuation.

Below is my childhood home: 7504 Hancock Ave, 20912. My parents sold it in 1995 for \$175,000. It is currently estimated to be worth \$1.34 million per Zillow. Notably, this is not in Takoma Park's historic district. Home sizes and valuations per square foot are significantly higher there.



Please consider this cautionary tale carefully, as it would be tragic for me to be orphaned from a second community that I call home in my lifetime. Designating Spruce Hill as historic will actively harm me and my family. It's that simple.

I also cosign everything below.

Historic Designation will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Leonard Bonarek  
449 S 48th St

**From:** [Julia Murdza](#)  
**To:** [preservation: Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Thursday, April 18, 2024 9:59:56 AM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Julia Murdza  
4735 Hazel Ave, Philadelphia PA, 19143



**From:** [Alexander Milone](#)  
**To:** [preservation: Jamie Gauthier](#)  
**Cc:** [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Thursday, April 18, 2024 8:04:21 PM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive, limiting all but the wealthiest residents from being able to maintain and repair their homes. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reducing access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business. This proposed district is being pushed by a select and privileged group of residents who are attempting to push out low income residents and block anything new from being built in the district that costs less than 1 million dollars. There is no justification for this proposed historic district that necessitates it being implemented vs continuing to approve properties to the historic register based on individual merits.

There is an important balance that must be achieved between the preservation of historic buildings and allowing places to change with the times. This proposal doesn't do that, it only makes the situation worse for everyone but existing wealthy homeowners.

Sincerely,  
Alexander Milone  
1347 S Bouiver ST.  
Philadelphia PA, 19146

**From:** [Will Tung](#)  
**To:** [Jamie Gauthier](#); [preservation](#)  
**Cc:** [Andrew Goodman](#); [SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com](mailto:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant  
**Date:** Thursday, April 18, 2024 4:56:12 PM

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

When I was as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania I rented apartments in both 4029 Spruce Street and 4054 Spruce Street — both within the proposed district. It was affordability that drove me to seek off-campus housing -- Penn tuition isn't cheap, and my college years were an extremely stressful time for my family and myself financially.

Establishing a historic district here will further drive up area rents by both mandating expensive repairs and by making housing more difficult to build.

We are facing an affordable housing crisis both citywide and here in West Philly. The establishment of a historic district runs counter to our shared values of ensuring West Philly maintains its economic and racial diversity.

The disdain I hear from my fellow neighbors for undergraduates and newer residents is disheartening -- because my experience living in Spruce Hill in my early 20s is where I found my love of Philadelphia, and it is in West Philly where my wife and I chose to settle down and raise a family. Driving our decision to locate here is affordability and proximity to transit above aesthetics.

I now work in municipal service as a firefighter. I lament that neighborhoods like Spruce Hill, its many public amenities, and excellent public schools are out of reach for city employees like me due to a lack of available affordable housing.

This historic designation will only further cement Spruce Hill as a neighborhood only for the wealthiest Philadelphians.

We need to consider the people who inhabit a neighborhood and make sure their needs come before the physical appearance of its buildings.

Will Tung  
5120 Springfield Ave  
973-222-5690

**Fw: Spruce Hill Historic designation**

preservation &lt;preservation@Phila.gov&gt;

Wed 4/24/2024 10:02 AM

To: Kim Chantry &lt;Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov&gt;

**From:** murray dubin <murray.dubin@gmail.com>**Sent:** Tuesday, April 23, 2024 2:02 PM**To:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>**Subject:** Spruce Hill Historic designation

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gentlepeople,

I have lived in the southeast quadrant of the current historic designation request since 1971, in an apartment on the corner of Pine and St. Marks for less than two years, as a homeowner on the 4200 block of Osage for 46 years, and in the condo on 42nd Street, between Pine and Osage for nearly five years. If you look at these three spots, you'll see that my wife, Libby, and I have moved less than 100 yards since 1971.

Why mess up a good thing?

Don't let the developers knock down one gorgeous old house with a high rise apartment box.

Don't let them mess it up.

sincerely,

Murray Dubin  
4200 Pine Street  
Apt. 105  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19104  
267-290-6161

I am writing this comment to challenge the Spruce Hill Historic District Application. My name is Andrew Cullen and I am a Product Manager at Homesite Insurance, a Boston based property insurance company. I work remote and have for 3 of the 4 years I have lived in Spruce Hill. I currently live on the west side of 43rd street, across from the proposed quadrant.

I am genuinely conflicted about whether I should comment on this proposal. I have no affiliation with any property developers in the area, nor do I want to represent their interests. In fact, the Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA) and I agree that the new development in our neighborhood largely looks terrible. The developers often do the bare minimum to make a building habitable. I mean, would it kill these guys to plant a tree or get their setbacks right? This is basic stuff and we aren't seeing it.

However, I feel compelled because of the damaging effects the sheer scope of this proposal would cause. If all four quadrants are approved by the historic commission, it will include 1900 buildings -- practically the entire neighborhood, in the desirable Penn Alexander catchment, and where affordable housing is increasingly scarce.

The SHCA argues that this proposal will protect what remains of the historically significant architecture in the neighborhood and preserve its character. I agree, the architecture in this area is magnificent. The proposal for this quadrant specifically includes 4206-4218 Spruce Street. Designed by architects GW and WD Hewitt, this beautiful row is perhaps the finest example of residential Queen Anne architecture in the city.

The list goes on: Another Hewitt Brother's row on the 400 block of 42nd street, Samuel Sloan's Italianate mansions on Woodland Terrace and Pine Street, and Clarence Clark Jr's house on 42nd and Spruce are all included in the proposed historic district. All of these buildings are architecturally significant and contribute to the character of the neighborhood. The thing is, all of these buildings are already historically protected -- and so are 180 other properties in the quadrant of the proposed historic district being reviewed today.

The character of the neighborhood is already preserved. These buildings are already protected. Spruce Hill has many unadorned apartment buildings, some are original, but many of them are infill developments. These infill buildings replaced more ornate Victorian homes and country houses as the housing needs of the neighborhood changed. The only difference between these apartments and what is being built in our neighborhood today is that they are 60 years old and built with bricks.

We are seeing densification at key intersections near transit corridors -- exactly where we want dense residential development to occur. These developers aren't going 5 or 6 blocks back into the quietest, most residential blocks in our neighborhood. They are building big on Chestnut Street. Why, because that's what the neighborhood is demanding. Barry Grossbach, the principal advocate of this historic district is on record saying "students today want their own bathrooms." Well, Barry, that's what the developers are giving them.

Spruce Hill is more than just porches and turrets. It's a lively and socioeconomically diverse neighborhood that has a variety of housing options to meet the needs of all people who choose to live in it. This proposed historic district is an attempt to subvert zoning codes and make it more difficult to build housing the neighborhood needs because a group of about 12 homeowners don't like how they look. I am afraid that if this historic district goes through, in 40 years Spruce Hill will look like Park Slope, beautiful to be sure, but a monoculture of affluent, white homeowners, instead of the beautiful melting pot it is today.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cullen  
Senior Behavioral Economist and Product Owner  
Homesite Insurance  
328 S 43rd St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

## Spruce Hill Preservation

Rick Valentin <rvalen13@student.ccp.edu>

Sun 5/12/2024 11:10 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Hello,

Spruce Hill in West Philadelphia is where I live. This beautiful historic district is incredibly beautiful as it is. The residence here wants the natural historic beauty of Spruce Hill preserved. Please grant Spruce Hill a historic district.

Kind Regards,

Rick Vakentin

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## I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant

Zed . <zed@kolk.me>

Tue 5/21/2024 11:06 AM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>;Jamie Gauthier <Jamie.Gauthier@phila.gov>

Cc:SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com <SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com>

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Zed Kolk  
2041 Chestnut St., Apt 1  
Philly, PA 19103

Sent from my iPhone



May 11, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

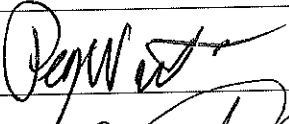
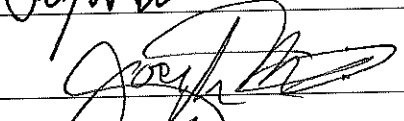
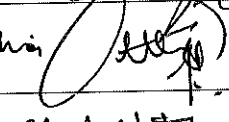
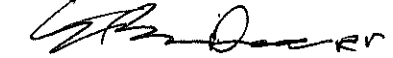


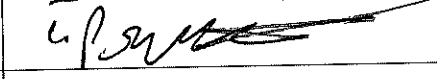

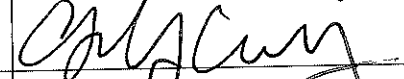
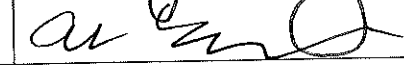
Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

We, the undersigned, here express our undiluted support for the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant by the Spruce Hill Community Association. We understand that:


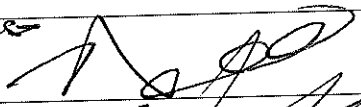
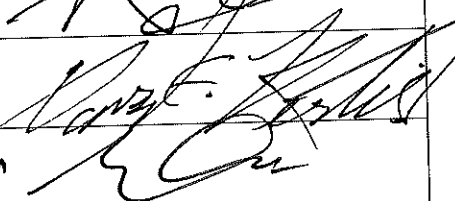

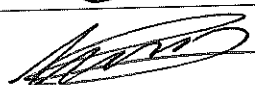

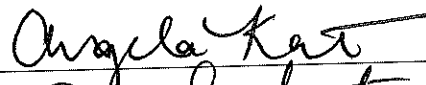
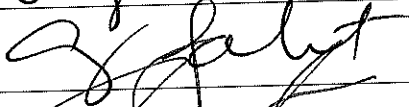
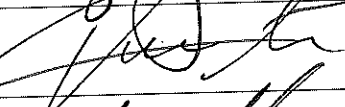
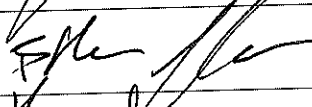
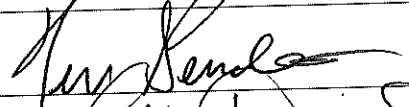

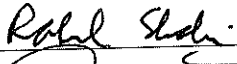
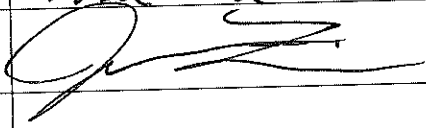
- Spruce Hill is one of the earliest and most significant Victorian streetcar suburbs in the nation
- The variety of housing types mirrors the variety of people who live here
- Old buildings need new ideas; small businesses flourish in this human scale environment
- Preservation is climate action; the greenest building is already built
- Designation leads to incentives for maintaining houses and keeping people in their homes
- Our porches, stoops, balconies, parks & outdoor café seating facilitate community gathering and a sense of place

We urge the Philadelphia Historical Commission to vote in favor of the designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District and the social and cultural values it embodies.

Thank you.

Name	Address	Signature
Peg Wright	1010 S. 47 <sup>th</sup> 19143	
Joseph Minardi	2408 S. OPAL ST <sup>19145</sup>	
Abinaya Arulsekran	506 S 41 <sup>st</sup> street, Philadelphia PA 19104	
ALBERTA SCOTT	PO Box 129 19004 Bala Cynwyd PA	Alberta Scott
Ethan Deemer	220 S. 47 <sup>th</sup> S.	
Hannah Barkman	220 S. 47 <sup>th</sup> St Philadelphia, PA 19139	Hannah Barkman
Olivia Ciraulo	349 Hermitage St. Philadelphia PA 19128	
Jeremy Berlinski	349 Hermitage St Philadelphia PA 19128	
Koyra Tomas	315 S 46 <sup>th</sup> Street	Koyra Tomas
Ayasha Sheh	4229 Baltimore Avenue	Ayasha Sheh
Mallhar Edwankeer	4229 Baltimore Ave	MPE Edwankeer.
Kerion Brinet	4308 Chestnut St.	
Benjamin Miller-Jenkins	4220 Pine St	
FRANK ALLEGRA	4600 CEDAR AVE	Frank Allegra
Michelle Gerald	242 S. 49 <sup>th</sup> St. C301	Michelle Gerald
Sheila Brown	2000 S. 58 <sup>th</sup> St.	Sheila Brown
Donna Casagrande	448 S. 49 <sup>th</sup> St.	Donna Casagrande
Ashley Cleary	524 S. 46 <sup>th</sup> St.	
Alicia Jacobs	310-922-9655	

Name	Address	Signature
Jamie Pillero	4242 Regent Sq <del>192000</del> 19104	Jamie Pillero
Brittany McCORM	220 S 47th St 217 19139	Brittany McCORM
Meauwique Pollock	4258 Chestnut st. Apt. 528 Phila PA 19104	Meauwique Pollock
Camille Coleman	4815 Windsor Ave Phila PA 19143	Camille Coleman
Kendal Utley	4209 Chester Ave 19104	Kendal Utley
Madeleine Darling	923 S. Conestoga St.	Madeleine Darling
Mel Kearney	443 S. 44th St	Mel Kearney
Adam Cohen	4059 Ludlow	Adam Cohen
Laura Cowden	4409 Sansom St.	Laura Cowden
<del>DOUGLAS BUTLER</del>	4409 Sansom St.	<del>DOUGLAS BUTLER</del>
Victori Cowden	4409 Sansom St	Victori Cowden
Luke Schroeder	4059 Ludlow St	Luke Schroeder
Leslie A Gaines	530 S. 45th Street	Leslie A. Gaines
Elizabeth Stegner	4816 Windsor Avenue	Elizabeth Stegner
JOANNE WITKENT Joanne Wilken	918 S. 48th St.	Joanne Wilken
Preston Hull	1004 S 49th	Preston Hull
Reese Brown	4330 Pine St. Apt. 2F	Reese Brown
Anthony Akimov	4517 Chestnut	Anthony Akimov
Simona Theimitus	4517 Chestnut	Simona Theimitus

Name	Address	Signature
LUCK LATONA	45 17 Chester	
PAUL FOLEY	247 <sup>W. R. [unclear]</sup> 19144	
DAVID KERTIS	505 So. Melville 19143	
MERVE OZGUR	227 BUCKINGHAM PL 19104	
BERKE MEDER	227 BUCKINGHAM PL.	
MAYA		
REBECCA GRYLION	4322 LARCHWOOD AVE.	
Angela Kunt	4506 Chester Ave.	
Amy Lambert	4247 Locust	
Paulo Arratia	4506 Chester Ave.	
Ethel Leatherbarn	819 Woodland Kree	
Tess Senderowicz	4217 Pine St.	
Lehe Daniel	512 Woodlawn Ter.	
Rahul Shahi	4104 Baltimore Ave	
John Fields	815 W. 46th St	

Spruce Hill Historic District Support

May 11, 2024

Name	Address	Signature
Paul Spreng	413, South 433 E	Paul Spreng
Paula Rukin (de)	509 S. 46 <sup>th</sup> St	Paula Rukin (de)
Rekha Hagen	19 University Ave.	Rekha Hagen
Sheela Bhagat	Garden Ct 4621 Pine St 6306	Sheela Bhagat
Ardrew Slack	221 S. Melville St Philadelphia	Ardrew Slack
Julia Dany	419 S 45 <sup>th</sup> St.	Julia Dany
Zowie Searcy	4101 S 45 <sup>th</sup>	Zowie Searcy
Sharon Rosenbly	217 S. Melville	Sharon Rosenbly
Jaimie Mayor	443 S 43 <sup>rd</sup> St	Jaimie Mayor
James Dugan	244 S. Melville	James Dugan
LORI STERMAN	41008 Osage	LORI STERMAN
Jenine Sanzari	4214 Osage	Jenine Sanzari
ANNA A. STEINER	481 3175 43 <sup>rd</sup>	ANNA A. STEINER
LISA DIAZ	5734 Walnut St Phil. PA 19134	LISA DIAZ
West Pomeroy	327 S 44 <sup>th</sup> St.	West Pomeroy
Diana Ganges	323 S. 44 <sup>th</sup> St	Diana Ganges
Diana Ganges	9643 Pine St	Diana Ganges
Cameron O'Grady	4231 Baltimore Ave	Cameron O'Grady
BERKE MEDER	227 BUCKINGHAM PL.	BERKE MEDER





## I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant

Jasmine Wallack <jasminewallack@gmail.com>

Wed 5/29/2024 11:00 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>; Jamie Gauthier <Jamie.Gauthier@phila.gov>

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

As a resident of the third district, I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reducing access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

Jasmine Wallack  
4809 Beaumont Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

## Spruce Hill Nomination

Joan Weiner <tljweiner@yahoo.com>

Sat 6/1/2024 11:37 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I have lived in University City (Spruce Hill) since 1979. I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The legacy of its early transit-oriented and speculative development for a growing city includes human scale character for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with porches and adaptively reused commercial buildings facilitating community interaction and allowing small businesses to flourish.

Spruce Hill's significance lies partly in its variety of housing types that have historically housed an equal variety of people. The diversity of living arrangements and people make the neighborhood unique and valuable.

Additionally, preservation aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,  
Joan Weiner  
4217 Pine street

## Spruce Hill Historic District

Anurag Sagar <adsagar1@gmail.com>

Sun 6/2/2024 8:05 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

Cc: Anurag Sagar <adsagar1@gmail.com>

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Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

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Additionally, preservation aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

As a 35 year resident of University City, I strongly urge your vote to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

~Anurag Sagar  
4604 Osage Avenue

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The legacy of its early transit-oriented and speculative development for a growing city includes human scale character for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with porches and adaptively reused commercial buildings facilitating community interaction and allowing small businesses to flourish.

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Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,



Jessica H. Senker, AIA  
Resident: 4503 Spruce Street (Spruce Hill)

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

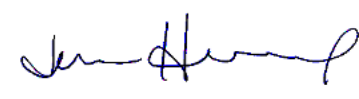
Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The legacy of its early transit-oriented and speculative development for a growing city includes human scale character for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with porches and adaptively reused commercial buildings facilitating community interaction and allowing small businesses to flourish.

Spruce Hill's significance lies partly in its variety of housing types that have historically housed an equal variety of people. The diversity of living arrangements and people make the neighborhood unique and valuable.

Additionally, preservation aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jessie Hemmons", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Jessie Hemmons

**Judith A. Silver**  
**4916 Osage Avenue**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19143**

June 19, 2024

To the Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission:

I am writing to express my support for the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

I am a homeowner living near the Southeast Quadrant. New to Philadelphia, newly employed in entry-level positions and pregnant with our first child, we purchased our home 36 years ago. We thought it might be a “starter home” and we might be compelled to move out of the city when our children were school age. We were delighted our modest 2-story twin was affordable and in a racially, ethnically and economically diverse neighborhood of renters and homeowners.

This diversity persists and the vibrancy of the SPHC, including the Southeast Quadrant, the beauty of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings consistently reinforce our desire to remain here and contribute to our community. Walkability and the attraction of so many small businesses in charming older buildings distinguish this area.

Over the past few years the pace of development in University City and the Spruce Hill area has been dizzying, and the destruction of buildings disappointing. Preserving the distinctive beauty and charm of the Southeast Quadrant will sustain its vibrancy.

I strongly encourage you to vote to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

Judith Silver



## Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant Nomination

Theresa Mond <pamotheroftwo@yahoo.com>

Wed 6/19/2024 5:03 PM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Philadelphia Historical Commission

1515 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19102

June 19, 2024

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

As the former owner of 4310 Osage Avenue for 23 years, I am writing this letter to express my total support of this nomination. My deceased husband, Mark Wagenveld, and I raised our two children in this gorgeous 1870 home and its surrounding vibrant community. The diverse architecture of these historic old homes is the lifeblood of this neighborhood. It is one of the key factors that makes Spruce Hill such a Philadelphia and national treasure!

Please don't allow developers to continue to wipe out the unique character of this area by tearing down the existing housing stock and building in its place gigantic boxes with no architectural integrity which will decisively and forevermore destroy the heart and soul of this precious community.

Sincerely,

Terry Mond

pamotheroftwo@yahoo.com

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

## I Oppose the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant

Jaquan Collins <jaquan.collins@me.com>

Thu 6/20/2024 10:05 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>; Jamie Gauthier <Jamie.Gauthier@phila.gov>

Cc: SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com <SHhistoricPreservation@gmail.com>

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Dear PHC, Councilmember Gauthier, and Spruce Hill Civic Association,

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

It will make home repairs more complicated, expensive and time intensive. It will also raise rents and home prices by restricting the supply of new housing -- accelerating gentrification in Spruce Hill, and reduce access for diverse families to the Penn Alexander school. It will also burden small business owners and limit new retail from modifying buildings to fit their business.

I support individual designation to achieve a pragmatic balance between preservation and development.

**Jaquan Collins**

## Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant

David <davidstraub@verizon.net>

Thu 6/20/2024 5:50 PM

To: Kim Chantry <Kim.Chantry@Phila.gov>; preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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June 20, 2024

*From:*

*Save Our Sites*

*2005 Cambridge Street*

*Philadelphia, PA 19130*

*To: The Designation Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, Meeting of Wednesday, June 26, 2024*

*Re: Designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant*

Save Our Sites wholeheartedly supports the designation of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant. The overall district, comprised of four quadrants, possesses a collections of Victorian residential structures unsurpassed in quantity and quality in the entire United States. The preservation of this invaluable collection is so important in maintaining and enhancing the livability of our Philadelphia community. Without question, increased livability for the residents of any city, ultimately results in needed economic benefit.

While the District is not in the very center of Philadelphia, visitors do come to Spruce Hill, people particularly who have business with the universities and hospitals. This includes the parents of students in the universities. Clearly, it is so important that these people see another aspect of historic Philadelphia that is beautiful, preserved and well maintained. This too leads to economic benifits.

From a practical perspective, the division of the larger district into four discrete quadrants is very logical and appropriate. This division, enables all parties involved to address matters of concern, with respect to the designation of each quadrant, in a time-saving, orderly and fair manner.

Again, Save Our Sites supports the designation of the Southeast Quadrant of the Spruce Hill Historic District, and looks forward to the eventual nomination and designation of the other three quadrants.

David S. Traub, AIA Emeritus  
Co-Founder of Save Our Sites  
2005 Cambridge Street

Philadelphia, PA 19130  
[davidstraub@verizon.net](mailto:davidstraub@verizon.net)  
215-915-6627



Virus-free. [www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

There is little doubt that Spruce Hill is historically significant. Even the attorneys for the contesting property owners admit this. What they argue is a technicality that presentation of a proposal for designation cannot be made in separate parts, but in its entirety.

It is clear to me that this argument is simply a pretext for delay - a delay that could - and probably will - be injurious to the neighborhood's historical quality. Without the immediate protection of designation, important contributing properties will be subject to gross restructuring and even demolition.

I say this from personal experience. I live on the 3700 block of Lancaster Avenue in a house that was, until three years ago, part of an intact 1870s row that extended the length of the entire block. Because the submission of the Powelton Village Historic District was delayed due to its extensive nature (in a parallel with Spruce Hill) a developer bought two of the properties in the middle of the row and promptly filed for demolition. (Inquirer writer Inga Saffron even wrote about the value of the intact row, but to no avail.) The two historically contributing houses are gone, replaced by a context-insensitive monstrosity that rises 15 feet higher than its neighbors.

This is the kind of greedy, speculative development that must be protected against by the quickest possible process of designation, even if it may be a non-traditional approach such as presenting a proposal in quadrants.

Sincerely,

Blaise Tobia  
3719 Lancaster Avenue  
Philadelphia PA 19104

George Poulin, AIA  
3502 Hamilton St  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

June 23, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
[preservation@phila.gov](mailto:preservation@phila.gov)

Dear Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

It is with heartfelt enthusiasm that I offer my support for the Southeast Quadrant of Spruce Hill for addition to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Philadelphia has so many incredible neighborhoods worthy of protection, but Spruce Hill is unsurpassed. The district encompasses an incredible tapestry of building types ranging from early suburban Italianate villas, large colonial revival apartment blocks, modest brick rowhomes, and impressive institutional structures of all shapes and sizes. The streets of Spruce Hill tell the story of Philadelphia's westward growth. It has been painful to witness the recent and accelerating destruction of Spruce Hill, with each new project eroding the aspects of the neighborhood (economically, socially, architecturally, and otherwise) which make it so unique.

As a homeowner residing in the Powelton Village Historic District, it has been a delight to see how new development and historic designation can happily coexist for a better outcome. Historic Designation does not stop development; it merely guides it so that new projects can reinforce the unique qualities of the neighborhood. Philadelphians deserve better, and historic designation is the way.

As a proud advocate of our built environment and the livability of neighborhoods across the City, I can think of no neighborhood as worthy of historic designation than Spruce Hill.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Poulin".

## Spruce Hill Historic Designation

Mary Goldman <marygoldman@gmail.com>

Sun 6/23/2024 3:58 PM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Mary L. Goldman

4107 Pine Street

Philadelphia, PA 19104

215-386-6659 215-495-3699

[marygoldman@gmail.com](mailto:marygoldman@gmail.com)

[preservation@phila.gov](mailto:preservation@phila.gov) .

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I am writing in support of Spruce Hill Community Association's application for a Historic District.

I have lived in this district since 1959 and in my house at 4107 Pine St. since 1961. I have watched as most everyone east of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street stays the same age except me. Although many of the houses used to be owner occupied with one or two apartments, I have seen predominately Campus Apartments, University City Housing, and the University of PA buy up most of these properties. For years they were not very helpful in keeping our neighborhood as well maintained as it should have been. I suppose that is how they became so successful.

Now with Penn requiring sophomores to live on campus, many properties are vacant. Without historic designation, I fear they could be demolished, destroying the quality housing of this neighborhood.

Indeed we have seen the destruction of abutting housing when "infill" houses were allowed to be built without any safe guards for the neighboring homes. And the threat of an inappropriately high 13 story building only a block away from me was finally defeated after extraordinary efforts on the part of many neighbors.



Spruce Hill has many stone and brick houses that far exceed the quality of new housing that now has threatened our neighborhood. The neighborhood has unique architecture that should definitely be maintained and can only be done with historic designation.

My house was built around 1866 but I have not incurred any huge costs to maintain it. Like most of the others around here it is very solid, so the argument that owners will be so adversely affected by historic designation I think is way overblown.

Just walking around the neighborhood is a pleasure because of the diversity of architecture, the trees, Clark Park and the diversity of businesses brought to us because of our immigrant neighbors who have come from all over the world.

It is not time to deny us our historic designation. Rather it is time to consider how to maintain these houses that have served so many generations (In my house 4). They should not be threatened just because the major landlords own so much and do not want us to have this designation.

Please help us keep this unique neighborhood and grant us this first step in Historic Designation.

Thank you,

Mary Goldman

Dear PHC and Councilmember Gauthier,

I am writing to express my views on the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District as a resident of Spruce Hill and West Philadelphia. The opinions expressed here are my own personal views.

I oppose the designation of the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeastern Quadrant.

**Spruce Hill is facing increasing affordability challenges because of high quality of life and not enough homes.**

In recent decades, Spruce Hill has seen increased housing prices and rents. This increase in housing costs is because more people and more families have wanted to live in Spruce Hill compared with the number of homes available. The competition for homes has resulted in increased home prices and rents.

- Home prices have increased much faster in Spruce Hill compared with the City of Philadelphia as a whole. According to data from Zillow, since 2000, home prices have increased approximately 180% faster in Spruce Hill compared with the City of Philadelphia as a whole.
- This increase in home prices reflects increased demand to live in Spruce Hill. This demand stems in part from access to the high-performing School District of Philadelphia public school, the Sadie T.M. Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School (opened in 2001), as well as other amenities such as safety and access to job opportunities.
- This increase in home prices is the result of demand exceeding the number of homes available. In short, there are more families that want to live in Spruce Hill than there are available homes.

**In turn, this increased cost of living has resulted in rapid demographic change as low-income households and nonwhite households have been priced out of Spruce Hill.**

- According to U.S. Census data from the American Community Survey, the eight Census tracts affected by the proposed Spruce Hill Historic District have experienced rapid demographic change in recent years.
- For these eight Census tracts, average household income grew significantly faster in Spruce Hill compared with the City of Philadelphia as a whole. Between 2010 and 2020, average household incomes in Spruce Hill grew from \$48,000 to \$93,000, an increase of 94%. For the City of Philadelphia as a whole, average household income grew from \$53,000 to \$84,000, an increase of 58%.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey data reflect 5-year averages; in what follows, 2010 refers to data from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey; 2020 refers to data from the 2018-2022 American Community Survey. (The latter are the most recent tract-level estimates available at this date.)

- The number of neighborhood children in households below the poverty line has fallen considerably. In 2010, 994 such children lived in Spruce Hill, compared with 463 in 2020, a 53% decline over ten years. In comparison, the number of children in households below the poverty line fell only 14% in the City of Philadelphia as a whole. In sum, low-income households and children in low-income households have found it harder to live in Spruce Hill and access the Penn Alexander School.
- The Penn Alexander School has seen rapid demographic change. According to the School District of Philadelphia, Black or African-American student enrollment has declined from 39 percent in the 2009-2010 school year to just 13 percent in the 2023-2024 school year. Nonwhite student enrollment has declined similarly, from 68 percent to 54 percent.

**The increase in housing costs and demographic turnover is significant because it affects most the most common type of household in Spruce Hill: renters.**

- According to the American Community Survey, in 2020, 80% of households (or 10,600 households) living in the eight census tracts affected by the proposed historic district were renters, compared with just 20% of households (2,645) who owned their homes.
- Newer structures are more important for renters. Among owner-occupiers, 78% of households live in housing units built before 1939. In contrast, just 59% of renter households live in housing units built before 1939.
- Compared with owners, renters are far more likely to live in housing units constructed after 1960. Over 3,000 renter households live in housing units built after 1960, compared with just over 300 owner households.
- Thus, compared with owners, older structures built before 1939 are significantly less important for housing renters in Spruce Hill. This is likely because homes in newer (built after 1960) housing units feature lower housing costs compared with prewar structures that have seen significant upgrades.

**Existing market forces are already driving historic preservation and reinvestment in older structures, exacerbating affordability challenges.**

- Modest amounts of new apartment development in Spruce Hill in recent years has been partially offset by the loss of rental units from conversions of multifamily structures into single-family homes.
- According to the American Community Survey, between 2010 and 2020, the number of rented housing units in single-unit structures (detached or attached) fell by 5 percent. At the same time, the number of owned housing units in single-unit structures increased by 5 percent, or nearly 100 units.
- These changes reflect the private investment of high-income households that are willing to pay more than renters for the oldest structures in our neighborhood and convert these rowhomes, twins and singles from multi-family structures (back) into single-family structures.

- While this kind of development has been a boon in terms of preserving and re-investing in older structures, it has come at the cost of reducing the number of homes available for rent.
- Overall, there has been substantial re-investment in older structures in Spruce Hill. The number of owned housing units in structures built before 1939 increased 13% between 2010 and 2020, or more than 240 units. Thus, while there have a handful of high-profile demolitions of older structures, this appears to be outweighed by substantially more residential investment in the oldest structures. On net, between 2010 and 2020, the number of homes in structures built before 1939 actually increased significantly, while the number of midcentury homes (built between 1940 and 1959) shrank.
- The historic district designation’s stringent review process and requirement for expensive materials will likely deter or slow down this existing process of continued investment in maintaining the neighborhood’s character.
- Overall, existing policies and market conditions in Spruce Hill are already leading to increased housing costs, declines in demographic diversity, and increased investment in the preservation and renovation of housing units in structures built before 1939.

**The proposed historic district designation exacerbates affordability challenges by increasing the cost of developing market-rate, affordable, and subsidized housing units.**

- Researchers have identified that the main factor in high housing costs is land use regulation. Land use regulations include, but are not limited to, building codes, zoning codes, public meeting requirements, environmental reviews, inclusionary zoning, and historic designation. According to economists Ed Glaeser and Joe Gyourko, “the gap between [housing] price and production cost can be understood as a regulatory tax.”<sup>2</sup>
- Regulations increase the cost of providing market-rate, affordable, and subsidized housing by increasing the costs of materials and inputs, lengthening the time of development, and increasing the uncertainty of investment outcomes.
- New market-rate development is one key mechanism for increasing affordability of neighborhoods. New private development improves affordability directly, over the long run, through the aging of new housing units and declines in rent. According to research by the economist Stuart Rosenthal, newly-constructed rental housing units “filter” to households of lower incomes at a rate of 2.5 percent per year.<sup>3</sup> His analysis suggests that after 20 years, formerly new rental units are occupied by households that have 40 percent lower incomes than the original residents, and after 50 years, formerly new rental units are occupied by households that have 70 percent lower incomes than the original residents. Rosenthal’s evidence is consistent with patterns seen in Spruce Hill, where structures built after 1960 are important for housing renters. New private development improves affordability in the short run through vacancy chains. According

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<sup>2</sup> Ed Glaeser and Joe Gyourko, “The Economic Implications of Housing Supply,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32(1): 3-30. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.32.1.3>

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Rosenthal, “Are Private Markets and Filtering a Viable Source of Low-Income Housing? Estimates from a Repeat-Income Model,” *American Economic Review* 104(2): 687-706. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42920713>

to research by economist Evan Mast, the homes provided by new multifamily construction leave other housing units vacant<sup>4</sup>. In turn, these vacancies then can be filled by other families, and so on. The sequence quickly reaches low-income households and low-income neighborhoods.

- Regulations also affect the supply of subsidized housing units. Historical designation may also reduce the potential number of subsidized units by increasing the cost of providing them.

### **The proposed historic district fails to balance preserving historical structures with other important goals.**

- Addressing Spruce Hill and West Philadelphia’s affordability challenges means developing more new housing units—whether they are private, market-rate development or publicly-subsidized units.
- The status quo in Spruce Hill is one where both current policy and market forces are pushing towards increased prices, reduced demographic diversity, and increased investment in historical structures.
- The proposed historic district irreversibly prioritizes historic preservation over other important goals, including addressing Spruce Hill’s increasing affordability challenges.
- The Historic Commission has a track record of being insensitive to addressing affordability challenges by restricting the number of new housing units. For example, the Historical Commission recently denied a 5-story, 33-unit apartment building in the Germantown Urban Village Historic District proposed for the site of a surface parking lot.
- In addition to affordability, the proposed historic district has other risks. For example, historic district designation will likely make it harder to attract new retail and new job opportunities. Between e-commerce and work from home, the economics of retail have changed significantly in recent years, and adapting to those changes will likely require adapting our built environment. This includes new development and adaptive re-use to accommodate new commercial uses. The historic district makes it less likely that Spruce Hill will continue to have thriving retail options and local job opportunities.
- Work from home and other challenges have threatened SEPTA's long-run sustainability. To sustain transit service in the long run, we may need to adapt our built environment. This includes new, denser, walkable development near transit corridors. The historic district will likely make sustaining frequent transit in our community more difficult.

For these reasons, I think the historic district is too aggressive in its prioritization of historic character and the interests of homeowners over other important community goals such as affordability, opportunity, walkability, quality of life, and sustainable transit.

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<sup>4</sup> Evan Mast, “The effect of new market-rate housing construction on the low-income housing market,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 133: 103383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2021.103383>

I support individual designation or a more limited scope for historic designation as a path towards balancing these objectives. The proposal under consideration shows that individual designation is working well; nearly 200 properties are already protected.

In sum, I value many things about our neighborhood, including its fantastic architectural legacy. But I also value the diversity of its residents, its mixing of retail, commercial, institutional, and residential uses, its walkability and access to frequent transit service, and its mix of buildings from the 19th century to the present day. The proposed historic district prioritizes the first goal exclusively, and risks compromising our community's ability to achieve the others. I urge you to reject the historic district designation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeffrey Lin

## Spruce Hill Historic District support letter

Jen Rock <jenrock1211@gmail.com>

Tue 6/25/2024 8:58 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The legacy of its early transit-oriented and speculative development for a growing city includes human scale character for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with porches and adaptively reused commercial buildings facilitating community interaction and allowing small businesses to flourish.

Spruce Hill's significance lies partly in its variety of housing types that have historically housed an equal variety of people. The diversity of living arrangements and people make the neighborhood unique and valuable.

Additionally, preservation aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,  
Jen Rock



## Support for Spruce Hill historic designation

Edda Katz <eddakatz@gmail.com>

Tue 6/25/2024 10:44 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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June 25, 2024

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I'm writing to support the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant. My late husband and I lived in the community for 38 years, and raised our daughter in this beautiful, historic, and diverse community. Having moved here from a similar neighborhood in Toronto, Ontario, we felt there was no better place to live in Philadelphia, and immediately felt at home in our incredibly friendly and supportive neighborhood.

Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Its significance and charm lies partly in the variety of housing types that have historically housed an equal variety of people. The diversity of living arrangements and people make the neighborhood unique and valuable. The tree-lined streets add to the beauty of the area.

Preservation also aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,  
Edda Katz

## Spruce Hill - SE Quadrant Nomination for Historic Designation

Mary McGettigan <mcgettig@aol.com>

Tue 6/25/2024 11:11 AM

To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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June 25, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Historical Commission:

I am writing to urge you to approve the designation of the Spruce Hill – SE Quadrant as an historic district and to add it to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The nomination clearly demonstrates that Spruce Hill satisfies the relevant criteria for designation as a Philadelphia neighborhood of historical, cultural and architectural significance. Indeed, since the first attempts to have Spruce Hill designated almost forty years ago and up to the present day, there have been no objections raised to its nomination for failure to meet the standards of significance.

Instead, the narrow economic interests of a small but powerful sector have thwarted its designation, to the detriment of our neighborhood and the city as a whole.

In the meantime, historic preservation has been recognized as a boon to the economies of both neighborhoods and entire cities. Outdated criticisms of preservation as the concern of wealthy aesthetes ignore the many instances of ordinary people fighting for the preservation of their communities on the grounds of cultural heritage and social impact, both past and present. And when “development” and “growth” are understood merely as the demolition of the old and the construction of the new, they fail to acknowledge the realities of climate change, ignoring the harmful effects of new construction on our environment and the benefits of adapting and re-using older buildings.

I hope that you will weigh the weakness of these criticisms against the strengths of the nomination and its contribution toward achieving the goals of the city’s historic preservation law.

As someone born, raised and educated in West Philadelphia, with a family history of over a hundred years there, I admit to a certain bias in favor of historic designation. The neighborhood I grew up in featured an unusual mix of brick rowhouses, apartment buildings both modest and grand, stately twins and a few surviving mansions. This rich and varied physical environment was matched by the social and economic diversity of its residents. I was fortunate to be raised in such surroundings and hope that other youngsters will continue to have that opportunity. But without the protection afforded by historic designation, buildings of social and historic value have been lost and continue to be threatened, for the preservation of this rare physical environment is crucial to the health and preservation of a unique and vibrant community.

Please vote to designate this Spruce Hill district.

Sincerely,

Mary R. McGettigan

6/25/24, 11:51 AM

Mail - preservation - Outlook

4533 Pine Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

Taylor Kessinger  
4814 Chester Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

June 25, 2024

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

RE: Opposition to Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant Nomination

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong **opposition** to the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

I am a renter just a few blocks away in Squirrel Hill. My wife and I have made a home in this community. We have volunteered our time and effort to help our neighbors, including acting as election workers and delivering food to low-income families. Spruce Hill is a regular destination for us; our toddler is a regular guest at Clark Park. We are concerned about the negative effect a historic designation would have on Spruce Hill and nearby neighborhoods like ours.

Over the last twenty years, rents and property values in this part of West Philadelphia have steadily risen, and this quadrant of Spruce Hill has lost about half of its Black population. This is not a result of new construction; it is arguably a result of a *lack* of new construction. As demand for housing has risen, supply has not kept up, so those with the deepest pockets have been able to bid up housing costs. A similar story [has played out in our own neighborhood](#).

The idea that a historic designation will preserve this area's diversity is absurd on its face. The University City Historical Society argues (probably correctly) that historic districts contribute "[steady appreciation rates for property values](#)". Another way to say "rising property values" is "rising home prices"—in effect, this will ensure that only wealthier and wealthier people can afford to purchase a home here.

Moreover, the Spruce Hill Community Association, a prominent voice in favor of a historic designation, admits that "[\[their\] primary goal is the retention of single-family housing in Spruce Hill, and the conversion of existing multi-family housing to owner-occupancy](#)". This is a euphemism for kicking renters out of the neighborhood, and they (again, probably correctly) surmise that a historic designation will assist them in this goal.

The character and vibrancy of this neighborhood are directly tied to its density. A historic designation would inhibit development, preventing the construction of badly needed infill housing. This will ultimately limit the density that makes our community so special.

It is no surprise that families want to live in a walkable, transit-oriented neighborhood next to Clark Park and mere walking distance to hotspots like the University of Pennsylvania. If they cannot afford to do so, they will look for housing in a nearby neighborhood instead. This will further exacerbate competition for housing in neighborhoods like ours, putting renters like us at risk of rent hikes and displacement. Spruce Hill is one of the wealthiest parts of West Philadelphia; increased development there poses the least risk to low-income residents and can help absorb demand for housing. By contrast, limiting development in Spruce Hill ensures that vulnerable neighborhoods nearby will bear the brunt of new construction.

I urge the Commission to reject this nomination. A historic designation would preserve the neighborhood's buildings at the cost of sacrificing its character and diversity. It would accelerate the gentrification of this neighborhood, exacerbate the affordability crisis, and place nearby neighborhoods at risk.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Taylor Kessinger

## WPUN supports the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant

West Philly United Neighbors <wpunrco@gmail.com>

Tue 6/25/2024 11:54 AM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

West Philly United Neighbors is a registered community organization (RCO) and supports the nomination of the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant.

Spruce Hill is one of the most special neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The legacy of its early transit-oriented and speculative development, with porches and adaptively reused commercial buildings facilitates community interaction and allows small businesses to flourish.

Spruce Hill's significance lies partly in its variety of housing types that have historically housed an equal variety of people. The diversity of living arrangements and people makes the neighborhood unique and valuable.

Additionally, preservation aligns with climate & sustainability goals, with the economic strength of small businesses, and with the relationship to our heritage that gives us a sense of orientation as Philadelphians. By supporting this nomination, we are saying that this place matters, for now and into the future.

Thank you for voting to include the Spruce Hill Historic District, Southeast Quadrant on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

Best regards,  
West Philly United Neighbors (RCO)