

# Greetings & News

Have you noticed that Fall is beginning to peak around the corner at us with her layers of red, orange, and yellow blooming? It's hard to believe how fast the year is flying by... On one hand I am sad to see the summer (and the rest of the year) go by so quickly. On the other hand, Fall brings us pumpkin pie and who can be sad about that?

This month's newsletter is focused on the historic project review process – a daunting task that fills many with dread, the desire to claim sovereignty over their corner of the world, and just general confusion about which board makes what approvals for what projects and through which people.

The good news is that we have been through the process, learning along the way how to smoothly navigate the process of getting approval for work on a historic building. We have even lived to tell about it. So we are sharing our experiences and knowledge with you, in the hopes of clarifying a sometimes very confusing subject.

As always, any questions, comments, and suggestions are welcomed. We love hearing from you.

All the best,

Danielle Groshong-Keperling



## HISTORIC RESTORATIONS

341 East Liberty Street

Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602

Phone: 717.291.4688

Toll Free: 877.461.6928

# Q&A with Lois Groshong

Chairperson of the Lancaster Historical Commission(LHC)



The Lancaster Historical Commission is a group of up to seven individuals appointed by City Council to review applications for new construction and demolition within the Heritage Conservation District in Lancaster created by City Council in 1999. Lois Groshong has sat on the Commission since its founding in 1999. The board currently has six members, and members typically come from a variety of backgrounds – architecture, construction, real estate, building inspection, engineering, etc. City Council appoints members as needed on a volunteer basis and there is no term limit.

### What does LHC do and why is it important?

LHC is an advisory review board for all new construction and demolition projects within Lancaster's Heritage Conservation District. The Heritage Commission and the Heritage

Conservation District it serves to safeguard are vital to preserving the City's architectural heritage that is not part of the protected historical district in Lancaster recognized on the National Register of Historic Places.

### What is the LHC guiding mission?

LHC advises architectural development and demolition within the Heritage Conservation District to maintain Lancaster's architectural and cultural history as the oldest inland city in the U.S. by balancing the past with the future of Lancaster's heritage.

### What is the review process with LHC?

Anyone who applies for a building permit for demolition and/or new construction in the Heritage Conservation District will automatically be referred to LHC for a review where they can present any drawings, blueprints, illustration boards or models that demonstrate the project they are planning. A conceptual review can also be requested for those projects that are still in the pre-planning phases if project managers want to explore the viability of the project they are considering.

### What are some of the factors LHC considers during a review?

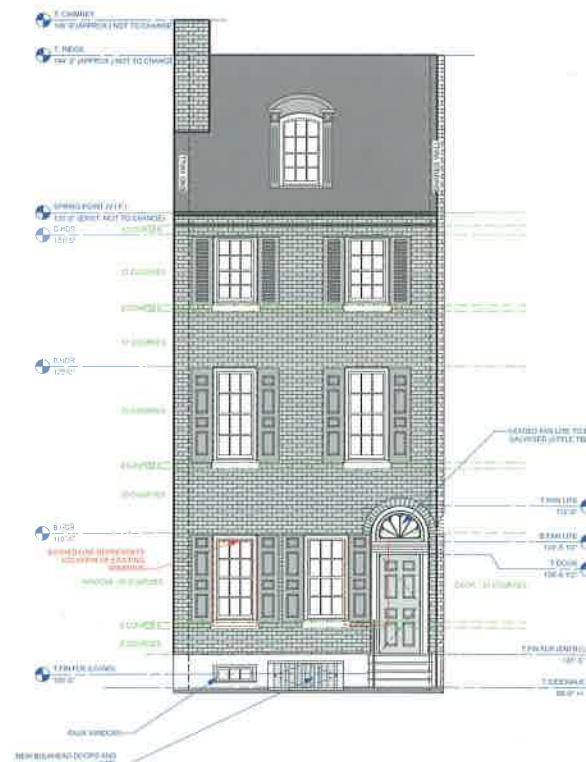
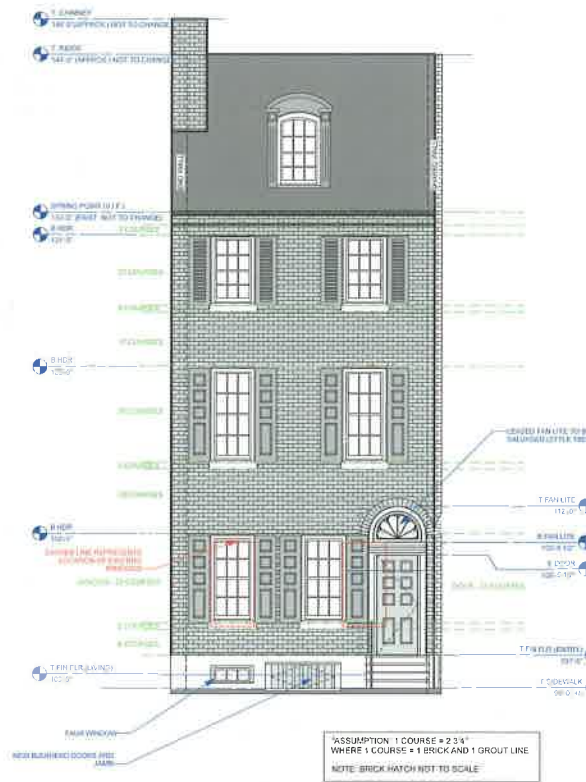
We evaluate the architectural integrity and significance of structures, their contribution to the city's character and neighboring streetscapes and the impacts new structures will make on the general historic and architectural character of the street, neighborhood, and city. When someone is proposing demolition, we also consider strongly what they are proposing to replace the structure with. To do this we use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties and Lancaster's own Design Standards in the Heritage Conservation District, to consider the general design, arrangement, texture, materials, and exterior architectural features of new and existing structures, as well as how they relate to other structures in the District.

### What is something people should know about LHC but don't?

We believe the city is worthy of having good building practices that will strengthen Lancaster's cultural resources and architectural heritage. It is not about making the city look the way the Commission thinks it should look.

# Case Study

## AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & APPROVAL PROCESS



### PROJECT BACKGROUND

We currently have two exterior restoration projects on townhouses in the Society Hill section of Philadelphia bordering Independence National Park. One project involves work on a nearly 200-year-old brick Greek Revival townhouse originally built as a private residence in the early 1800's. It was converted to a commercial storefront and in the late 1960's or early 1970's the building was converted back to a private residence with an inappropriate restoration. The current owner has hired us to return the façade to its original appearance. The other project involves restoration of the home's, likely original, windows on the early 1800's brick Federal townhouse.

### PROJECT RESEARCH

The project involving the Greek Revival townhouse required some research into an appropriate restoration. There were no original photos of the home, but there are a surprising number of period photos from Society Hill and surrounding buildings and streets. A study of these photos provides a wealth of information about how building facades that faced the street looked. From this research, we were able to determine how to do the work that needed to be done. We would need to relocate the first floor windows and recreate a front entrance door (with transom above), install King of Prussia marble sills, stairs, and water table, add historically accurate sash, frames, and shutters to the windows, and recreate a basement entrance.

### PROJECT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The Philadelphia Historical Commission is the City's regulatory agency that oversees work performed on historical buildings in the City. Since we are performing restoration work and not new construction, the full hearing process isn't necessary, but the projects do still need approval from the Commission.

The King of Prussia marble needed for the work on the Greek Revival townhouse was the most daunting task. King of Prussia marble was a geographically specific marble mined from 1790 until the 1860's in King of Prussia. The only source for King of Prussia marble is architectural salvage from demolished buildings. Obviously this can be difficult to find, fortunately an architectural salvage yard we contacted came across just the marble we needed in a surprisingly short period of time.

The brick needed for the Federal townhouse was also relatively easy to locate. An architectural salvage company that specialized in brick was demolishing a building with brick that matched the colors, density, and textures of the brick we needed, though the height was slightly larger. This was a difference easily remedied by cutting the replacement brick down in height to match the existing brick. But the brick was from the 1920's and the Historical Commission's preference was to use a new brick manufactured by Glen-Gery that they considered an acceptable replacement for historic brick. Unfortunately, this brick didn't match the existing brick on our project at all. So we created a mock-up on the building using the salvaged brick and had the Preservation Planner from the commission compare that match to the Glen-Gery brick he had recommended. The salvaged brick was indistinguishable from the original brick, while the Glen-Gery brick was obviously replacement material, so the Planner gave us the go-ahead to use the salvaged brick.

# HR

## in the News

Our project remodeling a Colonial kitchen in Old Town, Lancaster was recently featured in the Lancaster Newspapers' Sunday edition. You can read the article at:

[http://lancasteronline.com/article/local/730139\\_Lancaster-company-Historic-Restorations-remodels-kitchen-in-19th-century-home.html](http://lancasteronline.com/article/local/730139_Lancaster-company-Historic-Restorations-remodels-kitchen-in-19th-century-home.html)

The newspaper also wrote about our restoration project on Gettysburg Battlefield landmark Schmucker Hall. You can read that article at: [lancasteronline.com/article/local/709291\\_Lancaster-city-firm-is-restoring-battlefield-landmark.html](http://lancasteronline.com/article/local/709291_Lancaster-city-firm-is-restoring-battlefield-landmark.html)

Fall is one of our favorite times of year and we're celebrating with a Halloween costume contest. Because who doesn't like a good excuse to dress up as an alter ego? So dress up yourself, your pets, kids, grandparents, neighbors, your dolls, or anyone (or anything!) else you can wrangle into a costume and send us a picture by November 5th and our favorite picture will win a fabulous Fall gift basket from us.

Post entries to Facebook or email: [kobrien@historic-restorations.com](mailto:kobrien@historic-restorations.com)

Or mail them in to us at:  
#41 E. Liberty Street, Building #2,  
Lancaster, PA, 17602



# Facilitating Preservation

Projects involving historic properties are facilitated and regulated in a few different, and sometimes very confusing, ways. Here's a short "primer" on the regulations and reviews of projects involving historic buildings.

## FEDERAL FACILITATION

At the federal level, there are no general regulations for work performed on a historic property, though there are general guidelines for that work - the U.S. Department of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties offer specific guidelines on historically accurate methods of preserving, rehabilitating, restoring, and reconstructing historic buildings. The Department of the Interior also maintains the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of all historic places in the U.S.

There are regulations and a review process for the work performed on historic building projects that are applying for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program offering income tax forgiveness for investment projects that utilize historic buildings. Those regulations use the same criteria for determining qualification that the National Register uses and requires a review process.

## STATE FACILITATION

States do not generally have regulations for the work performed on a historic property, though many offer guidelines, design standards, and educational opportunities regarding appropriate treatments for those properties.

Each state also has a State Historic Preservation Office as mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act and appointed by the governor of their state or territory. This office is responsible for developing State and Territorial Historic Preservation Plans - strategic, statewide historic preservation plans that serve as public policy and general-level guides for historic preservation decisions throughout their state or territory.

## LOCAL FACILITATION

Historic preservation is largely regulated and overseen at the local level. Municipalities with a historic district (or several) on the National Register have a Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB). HARBs review all applications for new construction, demolition, and exterior alterations within the historic district(s) listed on the National Register.

Some municipalities may have other conservation districts that are overseen by another review board or commission that also are guided by the Standards, but may also take into consideration general cultural aspects of that particular geographic location.

*A note on building code compliance. There are a variety of building codes that historic buildings may or may not be subject to. Any historic building listed on the National Register of Historic Places is exempt from modern(IRC) building code compliance, in such case the existing building code(IEBC) is applicable. Historic buildings not listed on the National Register are not exempt and work on those buildings may need to comply with all applicable building codes for its locality.*