



RENEW > Historic Preservation



*Philadelphia2035
Citywide Vision*

Goal 8.1:
Support sensitive
development that
preserves and enhances
Philadelphia's multifaceted
past.



Case Study | *St. John the Baptist Church*

The current home of this Catholic congregation was designed by Patrick Charles Keely and constructed in 1894. This highly ornamented church is nestled into the hills of Manayunk and is one of its most iconic structures, being highly visible to motorists on the Schuylkill Expressway.

Deferred maintenance on the church has led to significant structural concerns. Repairs to buttresses and spires are estimated at \$429,000.

A committee of concerned community members and neighborhood representatives has since formed to raise the necessary funds for repairing this beacon of faith and tradition.

Cultural, Historic, and Architectural Resources

The physical development of the Lower Northwest began along its waterways. In the mid- to late-1600s, the first settlements appeared along the banks of the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek. By the 1800s, mills and factories were attracted to these waterways for both power and transportation. But soon railroads were introduced to the Lower Northwest, allowing for the creation of commuter suburbs within the Central Roxborough, East Falls, and Wissahickon neighborhoods. The architectural styles of these neighborhoods are modest, but form a source of identity and pride.

Topography has also had influenced the built environment. The Ridge Turnpike provided travelers with a vital route to the northwest suburbs. Buildings along the turnpike date to the 1600s and many are candidates for preservation. The influence of waterways and topography has produced grand pieces of utility and transportation infrastructure. The Manayunk Canal, its associated locks and sluice house, Roxborough Reservoir, Henry Avenue Bridge, and Walnut Lane Bridge represent engineering feats that stand among the city's finest.

The Roman Catholic faith also has played a large role in the lives of the district's residents. Grand Catholic churches are prominent within individual neighborhoods. A decrease in the number of parishioners has led to the closing of churches and schools. This creates opportunities for the reuse of parish buildings and land for private development. Recently, it has been determined that the district's most iconic Catholic church, St. John the Baptist, faces serious structural issues with its buttresses and spires.

The 1950s and 1960s brought a wave of suburbanization on much of the remaining greenfields of the district. Residential development of this era was characterized by the mass-produced Airlite home. There are, however, a number of mid-century modern homes peppered throughout the district. Many of these homes are especially noteworthy because of their combination of the mid-century style and Wissahickon schist facade material.

Recommendations

37. Prepare nominations on the Philadelphia Historic Register for the following buildings, structures, or groups of buildings:
 - Roxborough Home for Women;
 - Structures along Ridge Avenue that contributed to the historical development of the Ridge Turnpike;
 - Structures that best represent the historical development of the Oak Road
 - Structures that best represent the style of Wissahickon Mid-Century Modern
 - East Falls Masonic Hall;
 - Falls Bridge;
 - St. John the Baptist Church;
 - Church of the Holy Family; and
 - Historic staircases in the Manayunk, Roxborough, and Wissahickon neighborhoods
 - > Implementing Agencies: PHC, PCPC | CW Objective: 8.1.1
38. Create National Register Historic Districts:
 - Identify and designate an area that best represents the historical development of Central Roxborough;
 - > Implementing Agencies: PHMC, PCPC | CW Objective: 8.1.1
39. Encourage the reuse of Shawmont Station for commercial or another appropriate use; and
 - > Implementing Agencies: SEPTA | CW Objective: 8.1.1, 8.1.3
40. Stabilize and preserve the sluice house and locks of the Manayunk Canal
 - > Implementing Agencies: PPR | CW Objective: 8.1.1

Registered Cultural and Historic Resources



Legend

- National Register Site
- National Register District
- National Historic Landmark District
- Philadelphia Register Site
- Philadelphia Register District
- Philadelphia Historic Street

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation. Owners of income-producing properties listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places or of properties that are contributing resources within a National Register Historic District may be eligible for tax credits for the rehabilitation of the historic structure.

National Historic Landmarks and Landmark Districts

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic sites, buildings, structures, or objects designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. National Historic Landmark Districts are historic districts that have received the same designation.

National Designations



Local Designation



Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

The Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) is responsible for ensuring the preservation of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, interiors, and districts in the city. The commission identifies and designates historic resources, listing them on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It regulates preservation through the city's building and other permitting processes.



RENEW > Public Realm



Philadelphia2035
Citywide Vision

Goal 9.2:

Elevate public demand for good design in the public realm.

Gateways and Public Art

The district's limited points of entry create distinct gateways, some of which have already been improved with signs and infrastructure. One of the most established is the "Welcome to Main Street Manayunk" sign at the fork of Ridge Avenue and Main Street. Other gateway and public art treatments include the lighting of the Falls Bridge, Midvale Avenue median landscaping and signage, murals on the US-1 Twin Bridges, Johnny Manana's giant red pepper, the Manayunk Towpath steps, and signage along Ridge Avenue in the Roxborough and Wissahickon neighborhoods.

In other places there are significant crossings and points of entry that could benefit from a gateway treatment or could be employed as a prominent site for public art. Of the many rich opportunities, some important gateway moments include the Green Lane Bridge, Manayunk Bridge, the Wissahickon Gateway, and the intersection of Ridge and Henry Avenues. The Manayunk Towpath and the district's public staircases also provide opportunities for public art installations.

Definition | Gateway

A gateway is a moment of transition or point of entry between two or more neighborhoods, landscapes, districts, or other defined areas of the city. Gateway elements, such as signage, art installations, memorials, and/or monuments can introduce the character and spirit of a neighborhood as well as welcome in those traveling between different parts of our city.

Recommendations

41. Install gateway features at the following prominent entry points within the district:
 - Wissahickon Gateway;
 - Green Lane and Manayunk Bridges;
 - Ridge and Henry Avenues; and
 - US-1 Twin Bridges (in addition to existing murals)
 - > Implementing Agencies: EFDC, MDC, RDC, PennDOT, Streets | CW Objective: 9.2.2

Case Study | East Falls Gateway

For the past decade, East Falls Development Corporation has funded studies to improve connections, wayfinding, and signage in and around the East Falls Riverfront Business District. Specific attention was given to the intersection of Midvale Avenue and Kelly Drive as a gateway to the neighborhood. It experiences high traffic volume and is a primary connection to residential areas, businesses, and institutions such as Philadelphia University. Recently installed gateway improvements help to bring attention to this important moment.

Gateway improvement at
Midvale Avenue and Kelly Drive



Prominent Gateways

Legend

- Highways
- Major Roads
- Gateways



Ridge and Henry Avenues



US-1 Twin Bridges

Photo Credit: Burger Int Photography



Green Lane and Manayunk Bridges



Wissahickon Gateway

