



RENEW > Historic Preservation

Cultural, Historic, and Architectural Resources



Philadelphia2035
Citywide Vision

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



The exposition grounds covered about 1,000 acres.

Image courtesy of Fairmount Park Archives.



Looking toward the main entrance.

Image courtesy of Fairmount Park Archives.

In Lower South there are two concentrated areas of historical and architectural resources, FDR Park, and the Navy Yard's historic core. In addition, the Navy Yard hosts a variety of festivals that are becoming part of Philadelphia's cultural traditions.

FDR Park is on both the National Register and the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The designation includes both the landscape (the park itself) and some of its buildings. FDR Park has a significant amount of architectural and landscape design elements remaining from the 1912 Olmsted Brothers design of the park. A typical example of early 20th century landscape design, its picturesque "natural" setting has expansive fields, water features, and plantings that separate discrete recreational activities. Structures from the Olmsted plan that exist today include the boathouse (1916), several schist single-span bridges (1914), a gazebo (1914), and an arts and crafts-style guardhouse.

In 1926 FDR Park hosted the Sesquicentennial International Exposition. Exhibitors from around the world showcased their goods and culture, a replica of Market Street circa 1776 was created, and numerous parades, shows, and events were held. The new Municipal Stadium was built on the eastern portion of the site, which significantly reduced the park's size. Many buildings and pavilions were constructed for the event, including the 970 foot-long, 392 foot-wide Palace of Liberal Arts and Manufactures. The American Swedish Historical Museum is the only building created for the Sesquicentennial that is still standing. It was built as a permanent monument to Swedish contributions in the United States.

In the 1940s the park was renamed in honor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In the beginning of the 20th century, the City considered the park the linchpin in its regional park system, but today it serves more as a district park for South Philadelphia neighborhoods.

The Navy Yard is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard Historic District. 233 buildings, 28 structures, and one object were listed in 1999 as contributing resources. Many significant works of architecture remain in good condition. The first building constructed, the Civil Engineer's Residence, or "Quarters A," dates back to 1874. Other wood-frame officers' quarters followed in Victorian and Colonial revival styles. Broad Street was extended to the Delaware River in the early 1870s and a rectangular street grid was introduced. Brick, stone, and concrete buildings were numbered sequentially as they were built. Their styles range from Romanesque Revival to Italianate, Georgian Revival, and Second Empire.

Wartime expansion between 1916 and 1919 determined much of the built environment as it exists today. Gradually, steel framing, a new construction method, appeared in Navy Yard buildings for the first time. Ship construction transitioned to decommissioning and scrapping of obsolete ships. This refocusing of activities brought the filling of the back channel, connecting the Navy Yard to the mainland. For the Sesquicentennial, streets and grounds were improved and a new main gate and gatehouses were built. During the Navy Yard's greatest expansion period through the 1930s and 1940s, 86 buildings were added including several eight-story warehouses and a chapel. Many of the buildings were designed by Philadelphia architectural firms and not through the federal public works program.

The historic identity of the Navy Yard as a self-contained industrial city remains intact today. In 1994, a master plan was created to guide the redevelopment of the 1,200-acre tract. Its physical separation from the rest of the city in terms of infrastructure has allowed the area to become a leader in sustainable energy research and practice.

Recent annual events held on its grounds have quickly become part Philadelphia's culture. Examples include the Broad Street Run, Philly Craft Beer Festival, and the Philadelphia Vintage Base Ball Fair and Exposition. The Navy Yard has quickly grown into a self-contained "green city" and remains a valuable cultural, historical, and architectural resource for Philadelphia.

Recommendations

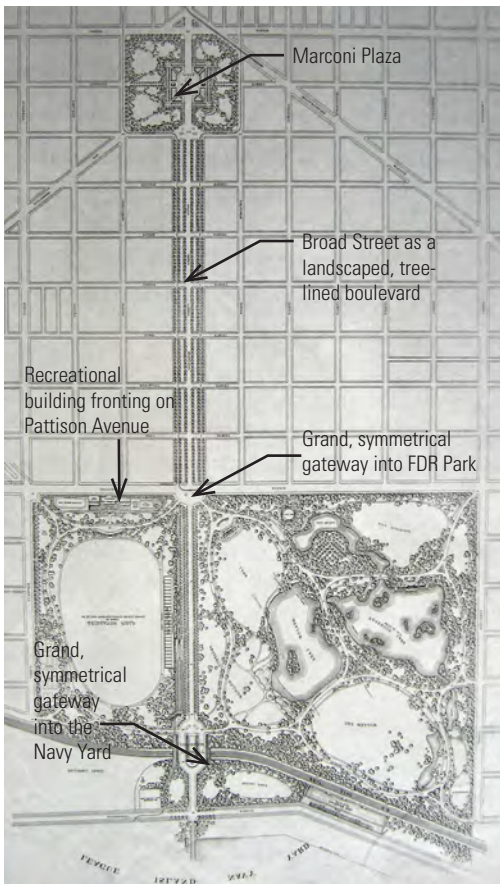
102. Increase awareness of the design and history of FDR Park through interpretative signage and kiosks.
 - > Implementing Agencies: PPR | CW Objective: 6.3.3
103. Designate American Swedish Historical Museum's interior to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.
 - > Implementing Agencies: PHC | CW Objectives: 8.1.1, 8.1.7
104. Ensure and promote that the adaptive reuse of historical buildings in FDR Park and the Navy Yard respects their original architectural intent.
 - > Implementing Agencies: PHC, PIDC | CW Objectives: 8.1.1, 8.1.2
105. Study the historic value of buildings within Sunoco's property for the purpose of potential historical designation (see [THRIVE](#), p. 37).
 - > Implementing Agencies: PHC | CW Objectives: 8.1.2, 8.2.1
106. Increase awareness of the Navy Yard's history through public tours and hosting of large events for a regional audience (see [THRIVE](#), p. 32).
 - > Implementing Agencies: Greater Philadelphia Preservation Alliance | CW Objectives: 8.1.1, 8.2.1



American Swedish Historical Museum, 2011



Urban Outfitters interior, 2011



Olmsted Brothers Landscape Design Plan, 1912

Image courtesy of National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

Parkway Interpretative Signage

In 2007, interpretative signage was installed along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway that shares information about the institutions, public sculpture, and the planning and design of the historic boulevard itself. A similar project could enhance the pedestrian experience at the FDR Park gateway and within the park. The project was completed by the Center City District in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department and area stakeholders.

