



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Property and Public Works to conduct hearings on the current status, existing plans and timeline for the redesign of underutilized public spaces in Center City Philadelphia, including but not limited to: the apron surrounding City Hall, Thomas Paine Plaza, the courtyard of City Hall and the ground floor of City Hall.

WHEREAS, In recent decades, thriving cities around the world have rededicated themselves to public spaces that are well-designed, provide year round enjoyment for visitors and often highlight a city's most valuable architectural achievements; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia City Hall is the City's crowning architectural achievement and is ranked twenty-first on the American Institute of Architect's list of "America's Favorite Architecture." It is listed directly behind the Brooklyn Bridge and ahead of other iconic structures such as the Library of Congress, Monticello, Yankee Stadium and the formerly-named Sears Tower; and

WHEREAS, The courtyard, apron, and ground floor of City Hall and the adjacent Thomas Paine Plaza not only detract from the beauty of City Hall's exterior, they remain woefully underutilized public spaces that provide little value despite being some of the City's most economically valuable publicly-owned property; and

WHEREAS, While Philadelphians have expressed frustration with public improvement and beautification projects that divert funds away from critical issues facing the City, there are countless examples of solutions to dramatically improve and redesign these spaces at little cost to the taxpayer; and

WHEREAS, It is the hope of Council that plans for the renovation or redesign of these public spaces currently exist or are in development. If no plan exists, Council requests that the Mayor and the Commissioner of Public Property convene a group to expeditiously draft a timeline and establish a process for the redesign and renovation of: the City Hall apron, the City Hall courtyard, the ground floor of City Hall and Thomas Paine Plaza. It is also the hope of Council that no more than fifteen percent of the total project cost shall be borne by the taxpayers of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Any major changes to this important public spaces must balance the need to preserve our greatest architectural asset, City Hall, with visually-appealing, sustainable, and accessible proposals that most significantly improve the spaces at the lowest cost to the taxpayer. It is requested that all future reports explore revenue sharing models that leverage private financing for these projects that include but are not limited to outdoor restaurants, the interior redesign of the ground floor of City Hall for possible commercial and retail space, and minimalist advertising as necessary; and

WHEREAS, The City should draw inspiration from repurposed public spaces around the world that draw communities together, connect previously disconnected neighborhoods, celebrate culture, promote sustainability and perhaps even encourage greater civic participation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Council Committee on

Public Property and Public Works is hereby authorized to hold public hearings on the current status, existing plans, and timeline for the redesign of underutilized public spaces in Center City Philadelphia, including but not limited to: the apron surrounding City Hall, Thomas Paine Plaza, the courtyard of City Hall and the ground floor of City Hall.