

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Rules to hold hearings examining the City of Philadelphia's citywide historic preservation survey and the impacts of historic designation on the development of new buildings, repairing properties to meet Historical Commission guidelines, and all other development specifically in underserved and/or low-income neighborhoods.

WHEREAS, In April 2019, Mayor Kenny's Historic Preservation Task Force released a set of recommendations to expand preservation efforts in Philadelphia. One of the primary recommendations of the report was to establish an ongoing, citywide survey that would identify cultural and historic resources throughout Philadelphia. In 2020, the William Penn Foundation agreed to assist the City with its efforts through funding a resource survey plan and pilot project; and

WHEREAS, In August 2020, the Department of Planning and Development issued a Request for Proposals to support an initial planning effort in advance of a citywide historic preservation survey. The Mayor's Fund for Philadelphia, the City of Philadelphia, and the Department of Planning and Development are seeking a qualified firm or individual that can provide facilitation services to support the Philadelphia Historical Commission's initial planning phase for a Historical and Cultural Resources Survey Plan and Pilot Project; and

WHEREAS, Maintaining a property within historic guidelines, especially properties with major structural issues, can hold a great cost burden. Properties under historic designation must get approval from the Historical Commission before doing work on their properties, must follow the terms of the commission's approvals, and must keep their properties in good condition. Many property owners may be unable to afford the repairs and updates to their homes or buildings because of a historic designation. Some owners have had liens placed on their properties because they were unable to maintain the upkeep according the standards; and

WHEREAS, While historic designation can preserve iconic structures and groups of properties, it can also obstruct new development and be counterproductive to the changes long-term residents desire in their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Multiple studies show that historic district designations can change neighborhood demographics, linking historic district designation to gentrification, and increase home maintenance and utility costs, which are a major burden for low-income families; and

WHEREAS, It is important for the City Council to preserve buildings, structures, sites, and objects that are important to the education, culture, traditions, and economic values of the City while also examining the unintended consequences of historic preservation on underserved communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby authorize the Committee on Rules to hold hearings examining the City of Philadelphia's citywide historic preservation survey and the impacts of historic designation on the development of new buildings, repairing properties to meet Historical Commission guidelines, and all other development specifically in underserved and/or low-income neighborhoods.

