

2022 HISTORIC PRESERVATION SYMPOSIUM

ROWHOUSE CITY

History and Adaptation in Philadelphia



ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM



Lena Street north of Penn Street, c. 1910.
Joseph Minardi photo collection.

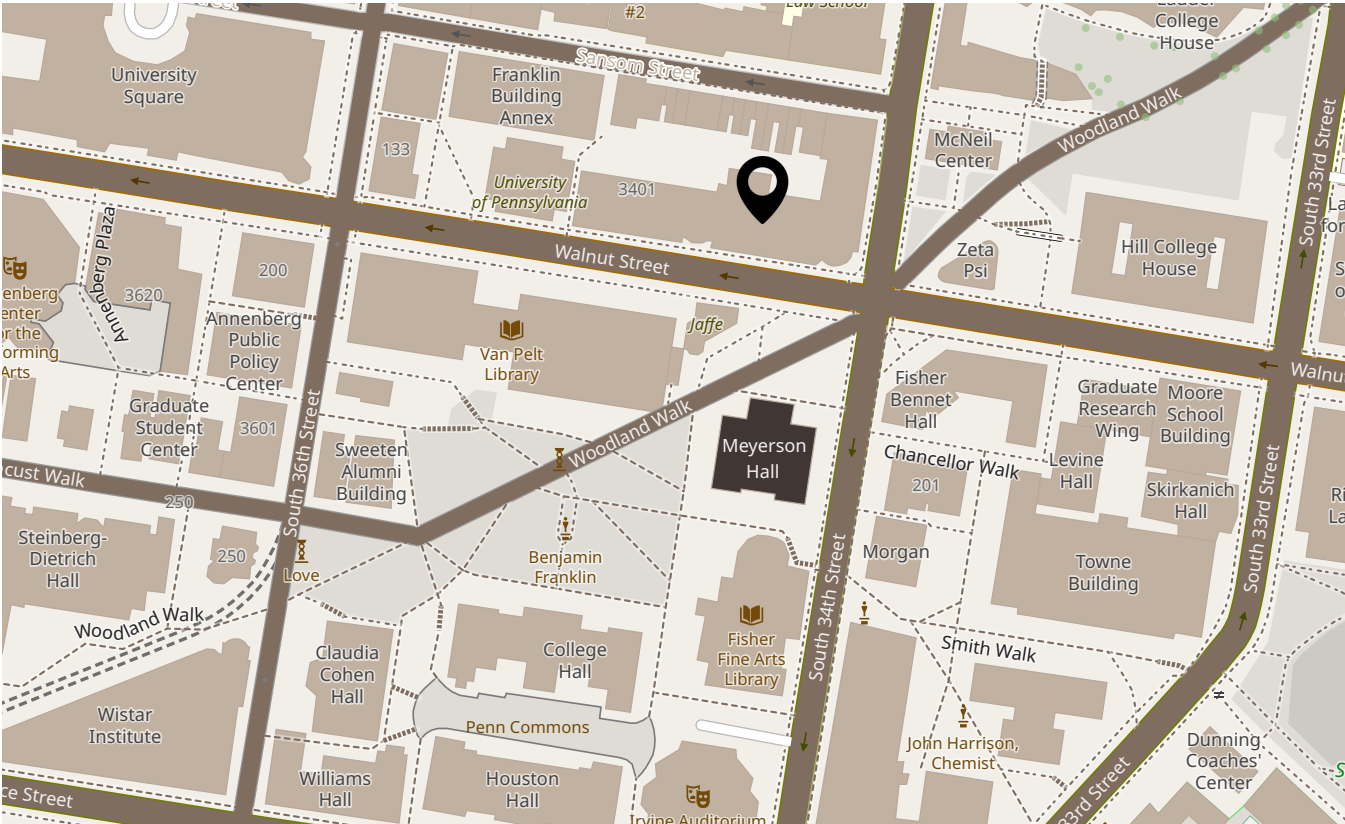
Rowhouse City: History and Adaptation in Philadelphia examines the history and development of the rowhouse in Philadelphia and critically evaluates its current conditions and the inherent advantages and challenges associated with its preservation in the 21st century.

Organized by the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the Weitzman School of Design, University of Pennsylvania, and the Association for Preservation Technology - Delaware Valley Chapter.

Cover image: Aerial view of Philadelphia looking East from 63rd Street. Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center. Temple University Libraries. Philadelphia, PA.

LOCATION

STUART WEITZMAN SCHOOL OF DESIGN MEYERSON HALL
210 S 34TH ST, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104



SCHEDULE at-a-glance

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7 Meyerson Hall, Plaza Gallery

The Rowhouse and Its Context: History, Development, Culture

8:00 – 9:15 AM Registration and Breakfast / Meyerson Hall

Rowhouse Precedents

9:15 – 9:30 AM **Frank Matero & Casey Weisdock:** Welcome and Introduction
Jocelyn Severin, Premier Building Restoration: Remarks from our Diamond Sponsor
9:30 – 10:15 AM **Charles Duff:** The North Atlantic Cities: An International Region of Architecture and City Design With its Centers in London, Amsterdam, and Philadelphia
10:15 – 10:30 AM Break

Shaping the Rowhouse | Session Chair: Bruce Lavery

10:30 – 11:00 AM **Ted Maust:** The Homes of Elfreth's Alley as Early Philadelphia Rowhouses
11:00 – 11:30 AM **Jeffrey Cohen:** Fire's Collateral Gift to History: Seeing Rowhouses Through the Lens of Old Insurance Surveys
11:30 – 12:00 PM **Alison K. Hoagland:** D.C. Rules! Building Regulations in the Nation's Capital
12:00 – 12:45 PM **Paul Hirshorn:** A Comparative Study of Philadelphia Rowhouses, 1977-1981
12:45 – 1:45 PM Lunch Break

Real Estate and Race | Session Chair: Jeffrey Cohen

1:45 – 2:15 PM **Donna Rilling:** The 'Poorer Class of the People of Colour in West Philadelphia' Build
2:15 – 2:45 PM **Amy Hillier:** Du Bois's Investigation of Philadelphia's Seventh Ward
2:45 – 3:15 PM **Bruce Lavery:** Mining Rowhouse Gold: Old Collections Newly Accessible
3:15 – 3:30 PM Break

20th-Century Adaptation | Session Chair: Frank Matero

3:30 – 4:00 PM **Andrew Dolkart:** The Philadelphia Rowhouse Reborn
4:00 – 4:30 PM **Francesca Ammon:** Preserving Society Hill: Mapping the Sites and Stories of Change in an Urban Renewal Neighborhood
4:30 – 5:00 PM **Brian Phillips:** Field Notes from a Rowhouse City Architect
5:00 – 5:15 PM **Starr Herr-Cardillo:** Summary Remarks
5:15 – 7:00 PM Cocktail Reception in Upper Gallery / Meyerson Hall

SCHEDULE at-a-glance

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8 Meyerson Hall, Plaza Gallery

Preservation and Adaptation: Practice and Future Strategies

8:00 – 9:00 AM Registration and Breakfast / Meyerson Hall

Community Approaches to Row Preservation | Session Chair: Kiki Bolender

9:00 – 9:30 AM **Nikil Saval:** SB1135, The Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2022: Preserving the Philadelphia Rowhouse and the Rural Farmhouse
9:30 – 10:00 AM **Jill Roberts & Jane Allen:** Preserving the Rowhouse City, House by House: The Healthy Rowhouse Project and Restore Repair Renew
10:00 – 10:30 AM Panel Discussion moderated by Kiki Bolender
10:30 – 10:45 AM Break

Energy Use and Regulatory Considerations | Session Chair: Charles DiSanto

10:45 – 11:15 AM **Liz Robinson:** Can Philadelphia Become the City of Carbon-Free Rowhome?
11:15 – 11:45 AM **Paul Thompson:** Current Trends in Passive Rowhouse Design: The Passive Rowhouse Manual
11:45 – 12:15 PM **Michael Hauptman:** Queen Village: Philadelphia's First Neighborhood Conservation District
12:15 – 1:15 PM Lunch Break

Case Studies and Engineering Issues

1:15 – 2:00 PM Preservation Case Study Pecha Kucha Presentations
Charles DiSanto, Paul Thompson, Emanuel Kelly, Dana Rice, Chris Mulford, Kurt Raymond, Jesse Gidley, & John Evans
2:00 – 3:00 PM **Timothy Lynch & Justin Spivey:** Structural Challenges of Shared-Wall Buildings
3:00 – 3:15 PM Break

The Future of the Philadelphia Rowhouse

3:15 – 4:45 PM Panel Discussion: The Future of the Philadelphia Rowhouse
Moderator: **Inga Saffron**
Panelists: **Kathy Dowdell, David Perri, Ian Smith, & Ken Weinstein**
4:45 – 5:00 PM **Jennifer Robinson:** Summary Remarks

Philadelphia's history is the story of energy in America: from coal to oil to gas to efficiency and solar, these modest rowhouses have seen it all. This basic structure is being adapted to manage the challenges of climate change as the city gets wetter and warmer. Shedding heat in summer has become just as important as retaining heat in winter, and powering the home with on-site solar on top of a white reflective roof can bring energy costs within reach of even the city's lowest income residents. Efforts to preserve existing affordable housing require deep energy savings and minimization of maintenance costs. Today's technologies have outpaced the regulatory regime as Pennsylvania struggles with its fossil fuel past.

Current Trends in Passive Rowhouse Design: The Passive Rowhouse Manual

Speaker: Paul Thompson 11:15 – 11:45 AM

Rowhouses are a ubiquitous building type in old cities such as Philadelphia, in part because they are space-efficient and cost effective, with inherent energy efficiency. They also support beautiful walkable urbanism.

New rowhouses are being built and older rowhouses are being renovated. People love them and can afford them. But almost all do not perform like they should. Rowhouses can be renovated to the most energy efficient standard—the Passive House—creating fossil fuel-free, low-carbon, comfortable, and healthy housing with great indoor air quality.

This presentation will address the many challenges and opportunities to achieve low-carbon performance in rowhouses: sophisticated energy modeling, building science-based detailing, builder training, material availability, valuing and financing “green” projects, municipal approvals, and the fact that building (well) is hard!

Passive rowhouses can be a catalyst for change in government policy and priorities. An informed and enthusiastic City response to global equity and health problems can and should include job training and neighborhood revitalization. We have health crises, partly due to substandard housing. An up-to-date approach to building and renovating rowhouses can synergize city-wide health care, energy, and carbon reduction strategies.

Rowhouses should be Passive Houses. We don't use whale oil for lighting, nor horse and buggy for transportation. Doable, up-to-date technology and techniques should be a matter of course as we build and renovate buildings. There is a building envelope failure epidemic due to poor quality construction and uniformed design. We can build better—and we must.

Queen Village: Philadelphia's First Neighborhood Conservation District

Speaker: Michael Hauptman 11:45 AM – 12:15 PM

Queen Village is Philadelphia's oldest neighborhood. And while many of its 18th- and 19th-century rowhouses are listed individually on the city's historic register, much of Queen Village's housing stock is

vulnerable to badly executed renovations and outright demolition. Most alarming, as property values increased, was the “garagification” of the neighborhood that was changing its character and the basic qualities that made it an attractive place to live and work. At that time, zoning regulations incentivized on-site parking, requiring new construction and some renovations to provide front-facing garages that began to adversely dominate the streetscape. This presentation describes the process of discovering and implementing the yet untried legislation that created the Neighborhood Conservation District Overlay, allowing individual neighborhoods to impose design guidelines that were customized to conserve that community's distinctive characteristics. Queen Village's achievement as Philadelphia's first NCD has led to several more successful neighborhood efforts. This presentation will also discuss the reasons why Point Breeze was not one of them, and why the 2012 revisions to the Zoning Code have sparked some interest in revisiting Queen Village's guidelines.

Preservation Case Studies: Pecha Kucha Presentations

Speakers: APT-DVC Members 1:15 – 2:00 PM

- Charles DiSanto | Fairmount Rowhouse Rehabilitation
- Paul Thompson | Pine Street Passive House Renovation
- Emanuel Kelly | John Coltrane House Feasibility Study
- Dana Rice & Chris Mulford | Dox Thrash House Project
- Kurt Raymond | Preserving Affordability
- Jesse Gidley & John M. Evans | Rowhouse Projects on Pittsburgh's North Side

Structural Challenges of Shared-Wall Buildings

Speakers: Timothy Lynch & Justin Spivey 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Despite their simple materiality of load-bearing masonry, wood framing, and the occasional metal beam, shared-wall buildings (twins, rowhouses, and commercial rows) are challenging to maintain and modify due to their continuity across property lines, with interior load-bearing walls often providing support to two buildings with different owners. Although it was and still is common for shared-wall buildings to be constructed as one continuous structure in a single campaign, ownership is typically divided among multiple parties, who can have differing attitudes toward maintenance and preservation.

Despite the prevalence of shared-wall buildings in the eastern U.S., recognition of their structural interdependence and the fragility of their interconnections between unreinforced masonry walls can be at odds with cultural and legal traditions favoring individual property rights. Where the interpretation of code provisions applicable to existing buildings might be straightforward for separate and independent structures, it can be significantly more complicated where the work affects and requires access to adjacent properties. The duty to protect adjacent properties during demolition, excavation, and construction also varies widely among cities with large inventories of shared-wall buildings.