



May 3, 2017

TESTIMONY BEFORE CITY COUNCIL RE: HISTORICAL AND PLANNING  
COMMISSION BUDGETS

My name is Elise Vider, and I serve as chair of the Design Advocacy Group or DAG, a 1,500-member, all-volunteer citizens group concerned with the planning and design of Philadelphia.

DAG strongly supports the first expansion of the Philadelphia Historical Commission in many years. The addition of two new preservation planners will help enable the commission to conduct more expedient reviews and processing of building and existing district nominations; identify potential resources and districts and, we hope, address a much-needed citywide survey.

There is still much more to be done at the Historical Commission, particularly in terms of the public education and outreach that the Commission is also charged with, but DAG applauds this much-needed measure and hopes it will be followed in successive years.

Regarding the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, there is an ongoing need for more staff to accomplish pressing matters, notably implementation of district plans and zoning remapping. Philadelphia's neighborhoods would be better served if the Planning Commission staff were also expanded.

Both the Historical and Planning commissions are seriously understaffed and under-resourced compared to even our much-smaller peer cities such as San Francisco and Boston. Going forward, Philadelphia should be committed to providing sufficient resources so that both commissions can best fulfill their roles as critical guardians of what we all treasure most about Philadelphia.

---

*c/o CultureWorks Greater Philadelphia, 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320,  
Philadelphia, PA 19107*

---

The Design Advocacy Group is a volunteer organization whose more than 1,500 members come from a broad spectrum of disciplines and share an interest in Philadelphia's design, development and planning. DAG's mission is to encourage public discussion about design and to advocate for design excellence.