

THE DESIGN ADVOCACY GROUP STANDS WITH THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 251030

Hello. I'm David Brownlee, one of the vice chairs of DAG, the Design Advocacy Group, a 25-year-old non-profit organization that is devoted to championing excellence and equity in Philadelphia's built environment. We have over 2000 online subscribers, and our monthly in-person meetings consistently draw 100 plus attendees.

We join the Preservation Alliance in emphatically urging you to reject the bill now before you.

Philadelphia's built history is one of our most precious resources. It attracts visitors and investors. It defines the neighborhoods that are our homes.

At a time when our national leaders (our national "developers") appear disinclined to protect the kind of rich and complex historical resources that shape our city, it's up to us to look after ourselves.

Fortunately, Philadelphia is up to the task. We have strong historic preservation laws and a strong historical commission, the first of its kind in the nation. To be sure, our commission could make good use of additional resources in the work of safeguarding and expanding the understanding of our character-defining architecture. It would also be good to have a city-wide architectural inventory, which would help us to identify what to protect and to capitalize on this important resource.

And to be sure, our preservation laws ought to be routinely reviewed and updated.

But the measure before you now is not such an updating. It encumbers the process of identifying and designating historic buildings and the process of protecting them in ways that favor only those who want to damage or destroy those assets. This is a deeply inappropriate action to be taking in a city as historic as ours. During our nation's 250th anniversary, we should be celebrating our unique and wonderful historic resources, not supporting processes that will lead to additional unnecessary demolitions.

In recent days, the present bill has been revised to make it less bad, but its net effect is still negative. It diminishes rather than enhances our ability to protect the things that define us.

When it comes to Philadelphia's irreplaceable history, less bad is still very bad indeed.