

Unprotected Pittsburgh

Preservation Priorities & Resources for
Preserving Pittsburgh's Historic Landmarks

Summary Report

Young
Preservationists
Association of
Pittsburgh
2006



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Findings



YPA's report reveals that there are a total of 130 unprotected historic sites in the City of Pittsburgh. These are sites that are not covered by the city's historic landmark ordinance, and are therefore not subject to public review or comment. They may be listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but many are not. In addition, many of these sites could be eligible for grant funds in the state's Historic Preservation Incentive Program currently pending in the Pennsylvania Senate.

In the Conclusion and Recommendation section, YPA highlights the "top ten" unprotected landmarks of particular interest for their historic and architectural integrity. Finally, we spotlight 15 potential historic districts that are currently not part of Pittsburgh's historic inventory.

Based on the findings, YPA makes the following five observations about the unprotected landmarks in the City of Pittsburgh.

1. Most of the sites included in this report (53) were built during the early twentieth century, 1900 to 1919.

Only a handful of sites in this report (14) were constructed before 1879 and only ten were constructed in the 1940-1969 period, with the remainder (33) being constructed in the 1880-1899 period, and 30 built after 1920.

Table 1. Dates of Construction for Unprotected Landmarks

| Years of Construction* | Total out of 130** |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1840-1879 | 14 |
| 1880-1899 | 33 |
| 1900-1919 | 53 |
| 1920-1939 | 20 |
| 1940-1969 (and after) | 10 |

*Some eras overlap for buildings that were built over many years or involved multiple stages of construction; therefore, the start date or earliest date of construction was selected.

2. The largest number of unprotected sites (37) are related to Pittsburgh's African American legacy.

Nineteenth century architecture and religious properties were the second and third largest number of unprotected sites.

A diverse cross-section of properties was examined for this report. As a result, the properties listed can be divided into several categories which help to explain the historical contexts that make them a value to the community.

The numerical breakdown of these categories is as follows*:

Table 2. Thematic Categories for Unprotected Landmarks

| Category | Number |
|---|--------|
| African American History | 37 |
| 19th Century Architecture | 16 |
| Religious Architecture | 15 |
| Residential Architecture | 12 |
| Industrial Architecture | 10 |
| Early 20th Century Skyscrapers | 8 |
| Civic Architecture | 7 |
| Commercial History | 6 |
| Pittsburgh's Engineering Legacy | 5 |
| Sports, Recreation and Entertainment | 3 |
| Education and Scientific Discovery | 3 |
| Preservation of the Recent Past (post-1950) | 2 |
| Transportation History | 2 |
| Women's History | 2 |
| Monuments and Statues | 1 |

*Primary themes were used for the sites; some structures fall into multiple categories.

Findings (continued)



Homeowners have no preservation protection in Friendship.

3. Neighborhoods with the most unprotected sites include Downtown and the Hill District.

Table 3. Pittsburgh Neighborhoods with the Most Unprotected Historic Sites

| Neighborhood | Number of Unprotected Sites |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Downtown | 24 |
| Hill District | 23 |
| Shadyside | 10 |
| Oakland | 8 |
| Lawrenceville | 7 |
| East Liberty | 6 |
| Southside | 6 |
| Homewood | 5 |
| Squirrel Hill | 4 |
| Strip District | 4 |
| North Shore | 3 |
| Central North Side | 3 |

The following neighborhoods each have two unprotected sites: Beltzhoover, Brighton Heights, Highland Park, Larimer, Point Breeze, Southside Slopes, and West End.

The following neighborhoods each have one unprotected site: Allegheny West, Bloomfield, Duquesne Heights, Elliott, Hazelwood, Mt. Washington, Perry North, Perry South, Polish Hill, Troy Hill, and Woods Run.

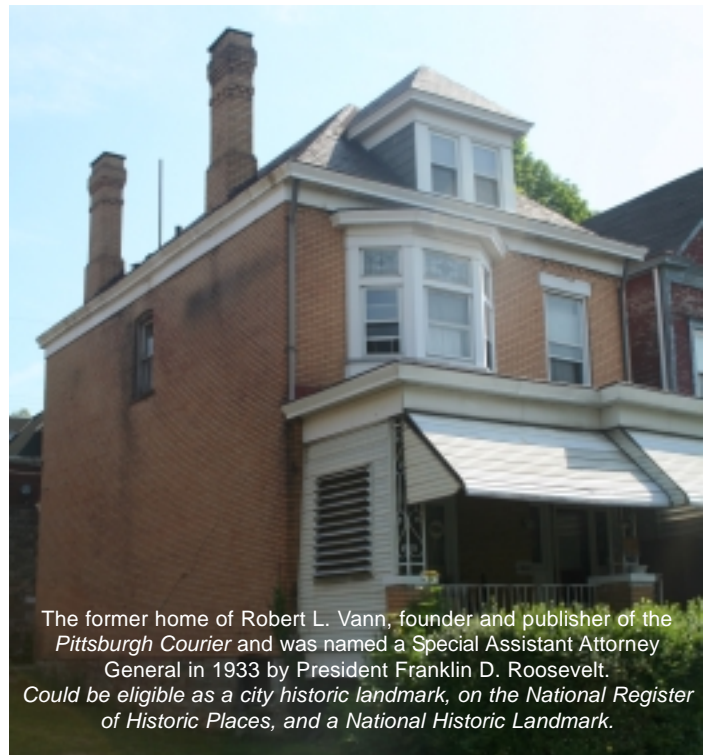
4. The City of Pittsburgh only has six National Historic Landmarks and no World Heritage Sites.

Table 4. National Historic Landmarks in the City of Pittsburgh

1. Allegheny County Courthouse & Jail, Downtown
2. Bigam Estate, Mt. Washington
3. Chatham Village, Mt. Washington
4. Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Allegheny West
5. Forks of the Ohio (Point State Park), Downtown
6. Smithfield Street Bridge, Downtown

5. The City of Pittsburgh only has three local historic landmarks dedicated to African American history:

- ◆ The Centre Avenue YMCA,
- ◆ John Wesley AME Zion Church, and the
- ◆ New Granada Theatre, all located in the Hill District.



The former home of Robert L. Vann, founder and publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and was named a Special Assistant Attorney General in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Could be eligible as a city historic landmark, on the National Register of Historic Places, and a National Historic Landmark.



Recommendations

YPA makes two basic recommendations: a "top ten list" of unprotected sites and 15 recommended historic districts.

YPA chose ten sites to represent the most glaring omission from the City of Pittsburgh’s Register of Historic Places.

These sites are architecturally or historically significant, represent major community landmarks, and are defining symbols of Pittsburgh. YPA believes that if these sites were altered or demolished, they would leave a huge void in the community and in the region, thus rendering the Pittsburgh region less able to compete in a global marketplace.

- ◆ Four of the top ten sites are related to African American history.
- ◆ Most of these are not in imminent danger of being demolished. But some, including the National Negro Opera Company home is in particularly bad physical shape (it’s currently vacant and vandalized).
- ◆ All ten should be listed on the city’s historic registry.

Table 5.
YPA’s “Top Ten Unprotected Historic Sites in Pittsburgh” (listed alphabetically):

1. August Wilson Birthplace and Home, Hill District
2. B’Nai Israel Synagogue Sanctuary, Garfield-East Liberty
3. Crawford Grill Number 2, Hill District
4. Duquesne Incline, Mt. Washington-Station Square
5. First Home of the National Negro Opera Company, Homewood
6. Harvard-Yale-Princeton Club, Downtown
7. Kaufmann’s Department Store (now Macy’s), Downtown
8. McCook House, Shadyside
9. Nabisco Bakery, East Liberty-Larimer
10. Robert L. Vann Home (founder of the Pittsburgh Courier), Homewood

YPA selected 15 neighborhoods which are eligible to become city historic districts.

Several of these are listed on are eligible for listing on the National Register or contain significant inventories of historic structures but are not city historic districts.

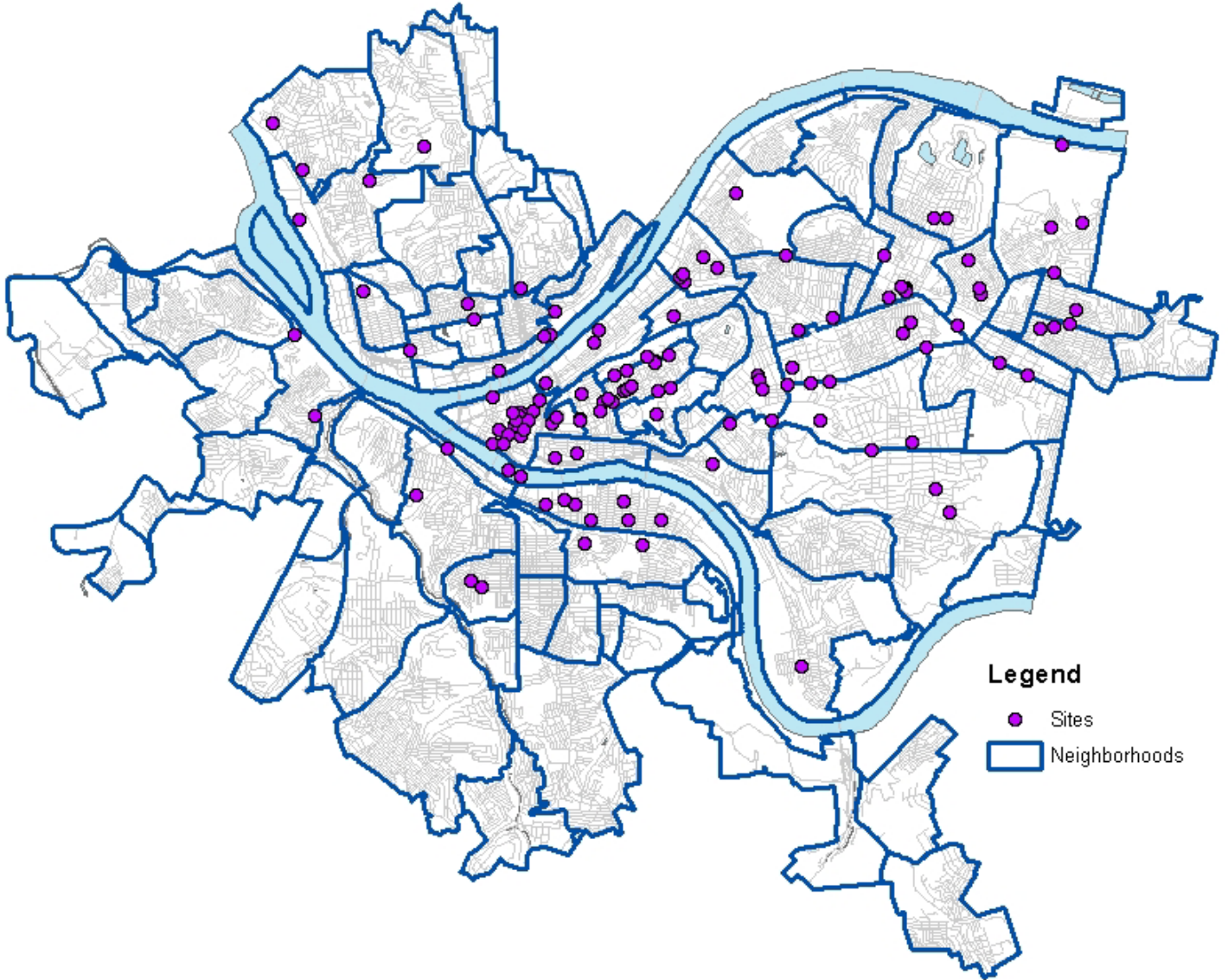
Table 6. Recommended City Historic Districts

1. Briarcliff Road, Point Breeze
2. Charles Street Rowhouse District, North Side
3. Chatham Village, Mt. Washington
4. East Liberty Town Square, East Liberty
5. Fourth Avenue, Downtown
6. Friendship Historic District, Friendship
7. Highland Park Historic District, Highland Park
8. Butler Street Historic District, Lawrenceville
9. Penn Avenue Arts Corridor, Bloomfield-Garfield-Friendship
10. Robin Road, Squirrel Hill
11. Shadyside West, Shadyside
12. Strip District Historic District, Strip District
13. Webster Avenue Historic District, Hill District
14. West End Valley Historic District, West End
15. Woodland Road Historic District, Squirrel Hill



Briar Cliff Road in Point Breeze is a recommended historic district.

Map of Unprotected Historic Sites



Legend

- Sites
- Neighborhoods



About YPA

About the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh (YPA) is a broad-based regional coalition of dynamic preservation leaders organized to ignite a new historic preservation movement in southwestern Pennsylvania. YPA's mission is the participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources. YPA works in collaboration with other organizations on a regional level to present education seminars, tours, and special events, conduct research, and advocate for preservation of the Pittsburgh region's history.

YPA was founded in 2002 in response to a number of critical preservation issues facing Southwestern Pennsylvania, such as sprawl, vacant properties, empty or underutilized religious spaces, and the loss of African American and industrial history. But no issue is more pressing than the Pittsburgh region's "demographic dilemma": the loss of young people. YPA attempts to capture the youth market in the nine-county southwestern Pennsylvania region* by offering a fun, memorable, and welcoming experience through its education programs, events, tours, research, and partnerships to engage the next generation in historic preservation.

The organization is guided by a 15-member voting Board of Directors and a 23-member non-voting Advisory Committee. YPA was incorporated with the PA Bureau of Charities in 2002 and received its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status from the IRS in 2004.

Highlights

In the past three years, YPA's programs and publications have resonated with young people. Since 2003, YPA has attracted more than 780 people to our public programs, raised more than \$34,000 in donations from 23 different donors, collaborated with more than 32 organizations, companies, and local government agencies to implement its activities, launched a website and published nine unique publications, hosted six interns, and spoken at 16 different events and organizations. YPA has seen its membership grow by 103% in three years. Since May 2003, there have been at least 41 media stories about YPA.

Since 2002, YPA has:

- ◆ Published four annual lists of the "Top Ten Best Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area";
- ◆ Presented the first conference for young preservationists, called "Places & Spaces: The Regeneration of Preservation," where YPA pioneered the "Wheeling Through History" historic bike tour;
- ◆ Presented three Historic Preservation Month Celebrations each May, which includes the presentation of an annual "Promise Award" to an emerging preservationist; and
- ◆ Successfully designated the New Granada Theatre in the Hill District as a City Historic Landmark, which has attracted subsequent preservation attention to the site.

Please visit YPA online at www.youngpreservationists.org.

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* Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.