



## **PRESERVING HISTORIC PROPERTIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

### **PRESERVE PITTSBURGH SUMMIT**

**MARCH 28, 2009**

The following document was developed to provide a framework to facilitate the discussion and production of creative approaches to preserve historically significant properties.

- **Every old building is not necessarily significant, and no single approach is appropriate in the treatment of every building.** Each historic property is unique, and the approach to that property's preservation should reflect that unique character.
- **Be familiar with the building's history and significance.** Understanding the historical and architectural significance of a building is crucial to promoting a preservation approach that is viable *and* sensitive to the building's historic character.
- **Assess those physical features that help us understand the building's history and significance.** Exterior features such as ornamental details, window and door arrangements as well as roof configuration and construction materials are usually relatively obvious.
- **Understand the building's relationship to its environs,** its lot, surrounding buildings, any landscaping and the street. Note whether the building is located in a residential or commercial area.
- **If possible, observe the building's interior.** Ornamental details, if any, as well as how interior spaces are arranged. If the interior has been largely gutted or is inaccessible, it needs to be noted and taken into account.
- **Consider appropriate uses.** The most viable preservation approach will be one that promotes an appropriate use for the building, taking into account the building's historic character. For example the establishment of a community center in an historic theater may be a use that fits the character of the theater. However, it may be very difficult to adaptively re-use a theater as a residence and still be sensitive to those features that make the building historically significant.
- **Be aware of local zoning/ordinance issues.** A preservation approach that does not meet current zoning makes the building's preservation more difficult.
- **Consider funding and financing options.** A number of financial institutions, historic tax credits, and state and federal grant programs can assist developers in bringing these historic properties back to life.



## ZONING & PLANNING ISSUES

The Zoning Department at City Planning must approve all building renovations and new construction (interior and exterior), and new uses for existing buildings, before the work may commence. This is true for buildings like the August Wilson House, New Granada Theater, National Negro Opera House, and for the Garden Theater, in addition to all other historic buildings. Usually this is a simple and straightforward process, but occasionally the zoning process can take some time.

For Locally Designated Historic Structures, like these, there is a four-step process for zoning approval:

**First**, the Historic Review Commission (or its staff) reviews the project for historic appropriateness, or its ability to conform to historic design guidelines. Projects that do not conform to these guidelines must be presented to the HRC at its monthly hearing. If the Historic Review Commission approves of the project, it issues a *Certificate of Appropriateness*, or an historic permit.

**Second**, once a Certificate of Appropriateness has been obtained, the applicant may apply for an exterior and interior renovation permit from the Zoning Department. The Zoning Department issues permits based on what is permitted by code, which varies by circumstance, and can depend on the type of work being done. Work conducted in certain areas of the city, or over a certain amount of money, trigger an additional review by the Planning Commission. This ensures that larger developments in prominent areas of the city will conform to specific design standards.

**Third**, the project is reviewed by the Bureau of Building Inspection. The Bureau of Building Inspection insures that qualified professionals are involved in the project, that the project meets all of the health and safety code requirements, and that the project meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The project will receive another building permit during this stage of the review process.

**Finally**, all new uses at each property require a Certificate of Occupancy. For example, if a building is to be converted from a single-family home to a community center, a Certificate of Occupancy is needed. Similarly, all new uses of accessory structures (garages, fences, etc.) and parking areas need Certificates of Occupancy as well. Certificates of Occupancy are granted for permitted uses – that is, uses that the Zoning Code says are acceptable uses for that part of town (or Zone).

If the property owner or developer desires to convert a property to a use that is not permitted-by-right, he will have to apply to the Zoning Administrator for a Special Exception, or to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a Variance. The following pages list each property under consideration of the YPA Summit, and each property's permitted uses.



**Garden Theater**  
Central North Side  
*Thomas H. Scott, 1915*



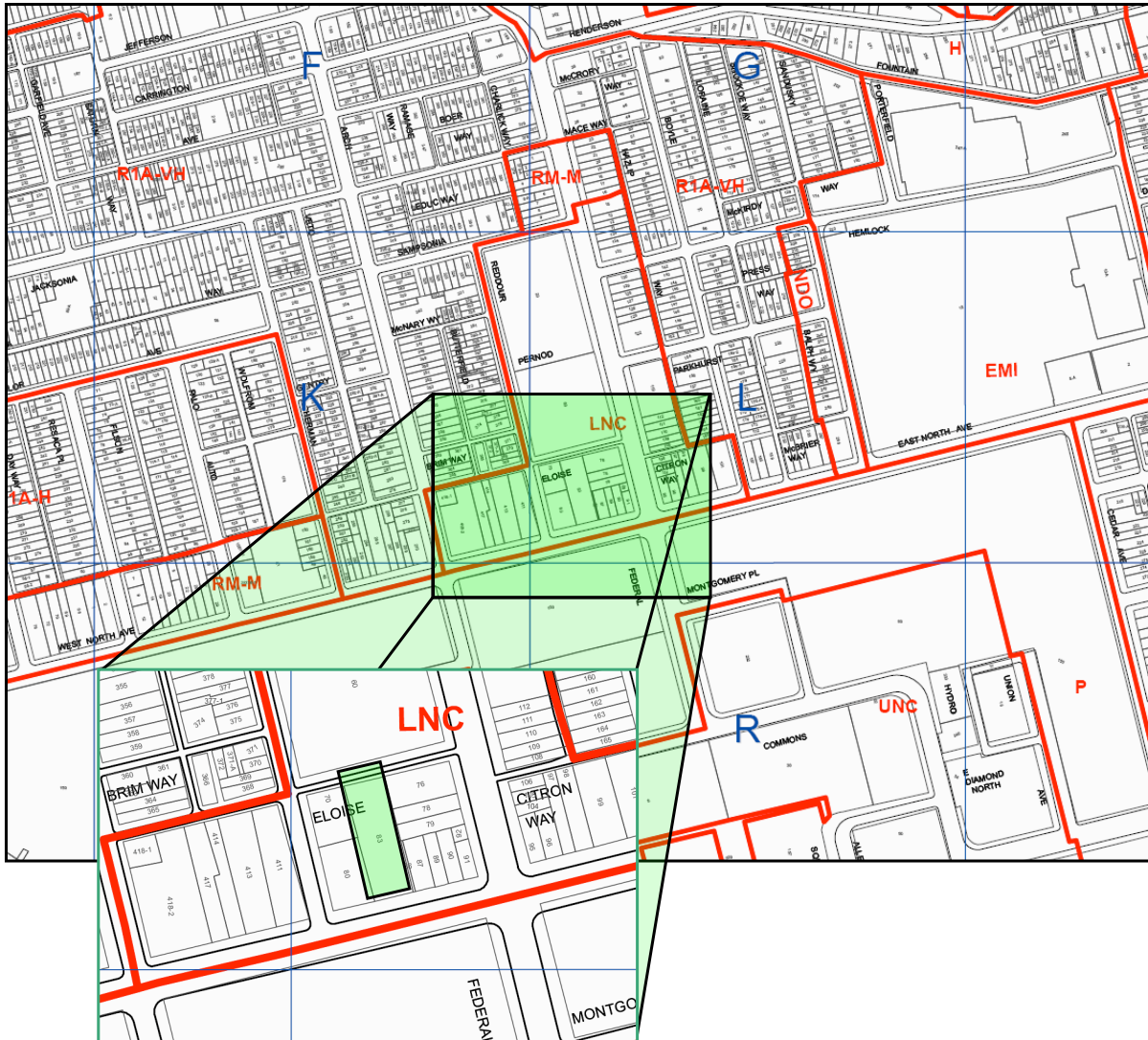


- **Garden Theater**

STATUS:  
 PARCEL NUMBER:  
 NEIGHBORHOOD:  
 ZONING CLASSIFICATION:  
 PERMITTED USES:

12 W North Avenue – Central Northside

Condemned  
 0023-L-00083  
 Central Northside  
 LNC [Local Neighborhood Commercial]  
*Permitted by Right:* Animal Care, Art or Music Studio, Bank of Financial Institution, Bed and Breakfast, Child Care, Community Center, Cultural Service, Laboratory/Research, Library, Medical Office/clinic, Office, Parks and Recreation, Recreation and Entertainment (movie theatres, bowling alley, skating rink, fitness centers, dance studios, court sports, swimming pools), Religious Assembly, Restaurant, Retail sales and services, Vocational School.





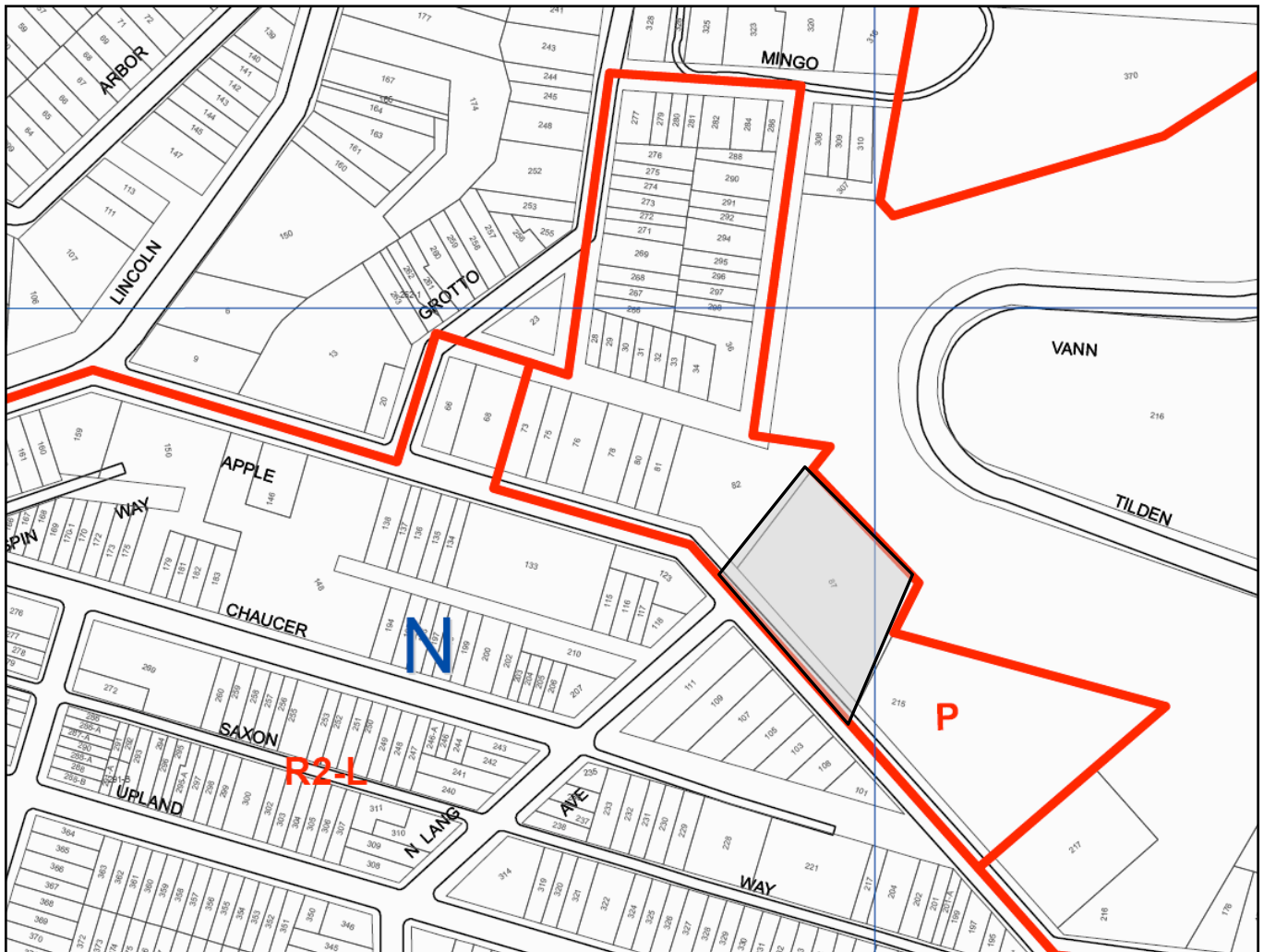


**National Negro Opera Company First Home**  
**Homewood/Lincoln-Lemington**  
*1894*





- National Negro Opera Company**      *7101 Apple Street – Homewood*  
 STATUS:    *Condemned*  
 PARCEL NUMBER:                                *0173-N-00087*  
 NEIGHBORHOOD:                                *Lincoln-Lemington*  
 ZONING CLASSIFICATION:                    *P [Parks]*  
 PERMITTED USES:                                *Permitted by Right: Community Center*





**New Granada Theatre**  
Hill District  
*Louis Bellinger, 1927*







- **New Granada Theater**

STATUS:  
 PARCEL NUMBER:  
 NEIGHBORHOOD:  
 ZONING CLASSIFICATION:  
 PERMITTED USES:

2009-13 Centre Avenue – Hill District

Condemned  
 010-N-261  
 Hill District  
 LNC [Local Neighborhood Commercial]  
*Permitted by Right:* Animal Care, Art or Music Studio, Bank of Financial Institution, Bed and Breakfast, Child Care, Community Center, Cultural Service, Laboratory/Research, Library, Medical Office/clinic, Office, Parks and Recreation, Recreation and Entertainment (movie theatres, bowling alley, skating rink, fitness centers, dance studios, court sports, swimming pools), Religious Assembly, Restaurant, Retail sales and services, Vocational School.







## **August Wilson Birthplace**

Hill District

*c. 1890*





**August Wilson Birthplace**

STATUS:  
 PARCEL NUMBER:  
 NEIGHBORHOOD:  
 ZONING CLASSIFICATION:  
 PERMITTED USES:

1724 Bedford Avenue – Hill District

Condemned  
 09-S-036  
 Hill District  
 RM-M [Residential Multi-Unit, Moderate Density]  
*Permitted by Right:* Residential Multi-Unit, Child Care

