

July 20, 2026

The Honorable Cherelle L. Parker
Mayor, City of Philadelphia
City Hall, Office 215
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: The former Philadelphia History Museum, 15 S. 7th Street

Dear Mayor Parker,

As representatives of Philadelphia's history institutions, preservation organizations, and cultural non-profits, we write to express our growing concern over the condition and uncertain future of the former Philadelphia History Museum building at 15 S. 7th Street.

For nearly two centuries, this building served as a place of learning and civic memory. Constructed in 1825 as the original home of the Franklin Institute and later given to the city by radio manufacturer A. Atwater Kent to serve as the Philadelphia History Museum, the John Haviland-designed building is an extraordinary architectural and cultural landmark.

Today, however, the former museum stands vacant, neglected, and without a public plan for its future. Since the museum's closure in July 2018 and the transfer of its collection to Drexel University, significant public attention has rightly focused on the stewardship of the artifacts and archival materials. Yet the building itself has remained in limbo. Eight years later, there is still no articulated path forward for the property's reuse, continued public ownership, or disposition.

The current situation cannot continue. Visible deterioration, deferred maintenance, ever-present litter and weeds, and chronic neglect have transformed this significant civic structure into an increasingly prominent symbol of inaction. As Philadelphia marked the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding at Independence Hall, the condition of this city-owned property just a block away sends the wrong message about how we value our history and steward public assets.

Following a June 2025 inspection, the City's Department of Licenses and Inspections issued multiple code violations for the property, including overgrown vegetation, accumulated trash and debris, graffiti, missing exterior components, and deficiencies related to required fire protection systems. Almost a year after the correction deadline, these violations remain open, underscoring the need for immediate action by the City as steward of this landmark.

Attached as Appendices A–C are recent photographs documenting the property's condition, the Department of Licenses and Inspections' Notice of Violation, and the current status of those violations.

We recognize that the property's future may be complicated by legal questions surrounding the terms of A. Atwater Kent's original gift. We are not asking the Administration to overstep those proceedings, but they cannot serve as a justification for indefinite neglect.

Regardless of the ultimate ownership outcome, the City of Philadelphia is the current steward of this landmark and has an obligation to maintain, secure, and plan for its future. Accordingly, we respectfully urge your Administration to:

- Commit to immediate stabilization and routine maintenance of the property to prevent further deterioration and correcting the outstanding L&I code violations;
- Evaluate viable long-term options, including continued city ownership with a renewed public use, partnership with a cultural institution, adaptive reuse, or sale, through a transparent public process.
- Publicly articulate a timeline and process for determining the building's future;

The former Philadelphia History Museum should not remain boarded, deteriorating, and functionally abandoned at the doorstep of America's birthplace. Its current condition stands in stark contrast to Philadelphia's reputation as a place that values history, culture, and our civic identity.

We urge your Administration to devote the attention and resources necessary to determine a clear path forward and demonstrate that Philadelphia remains committed to preserving and activating the places that tell our shared story.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your Administration and discuss constructive next steps.

Sincerely,

Patricia Wilson Aden
CEO
Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

Rev. Carolyn C. Cavaness
Pastor
Mother Bethel AME Church

Sean Connolly
Executive Director

Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust

Beth Shalom Hessel
Executive Director
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia

Amy Needle
CEO & President
Historic Philadelphia, Inc.

Michael Norris
Executive Director
Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia

Paul Steinke
Executive Director
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

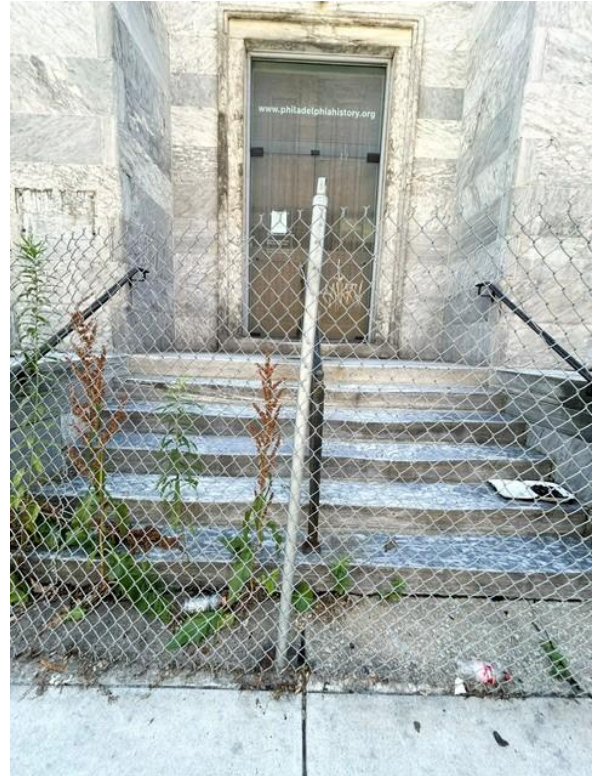
Eli Storch
Chair
Design Advocacy Group

cc: The Honorable Mark Squilla, Philadelphia City Council, 1st District
Valerie Gay, Chief Cultural Officer, Creative Philadelphia
Jessie Lawrence, Director, Department of Planning & Development
Joseph Brasky, Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Susan Slawson, Commissioner, Department of Parks and Recreation

Appendix A – Recent Photographs of 15 S. 7th Street



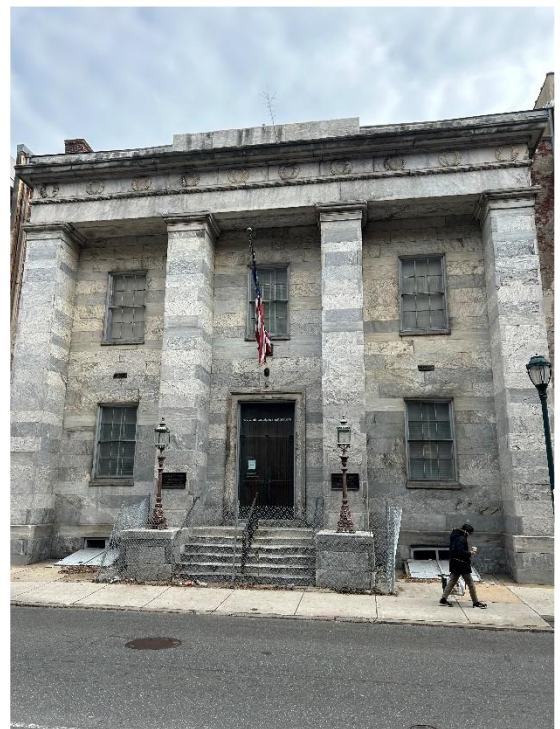
Taken May 21, 2026



Taken June 15, 2026



Taken December 8, 2024



Taken January 1, 2023

Appendix B – L&I Notice of Violation



✕ Violation Notice and Order to Correct

L&I File Number: CF-2025-058495

V1 		DISTRICT OFFICE Property Maintenance Unit 5TH FLR 2401 Walnut St Philadelphia, PA 19103 215-685-0535 PropertyMaintenanceUnit@phila.gov
PROPERTY IN VIOLATION 13-17 S 7TH ST, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2313		DATE OF NOTICE 06/18/2025
On 06/13/2025 the Department of Licenses and Inspections inspected/investigated the property in violation and found the following condition(s) or activity which violate the Philadelphia Code. Based on these the property is deemed: IN VIOLATION The property will remain in this status until all the violations below are corrected and the Department of Licenses and Inspections has verified the corrective action. You are the person responsible for the correction of these violations. Any permit or license obtained to comply a violation of working without or in excess of a permit or a license will result in an additional inspection fee equal to the cost of the permit or license. (Phila. Code § A-901.13) YOU ARE ORDERED TO MAKE THE NECESSARY REPAIRS AND/OR TAKE THE NECESSARY ACTION(S) TO CORRECT THE CITED CONDITIONS PRIOR TO 07/22/2025		
VIOLATIONS		
PHILA. CODE § PM15-304.7	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE The roof and flashing shall be sound, tight and not have defects that admit rain. Roof drainage shall be adequate to prevent dampness or deterioration in the walls or interior portion of the structure. Roof drains, gutters and downspouts shall be maintained in good repair and free from obstructions. Roof water shall not be discharged in a manner that creates a nuisance.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Replace the missing section of downspout.		
LOCATION Front exterior		

Violation Notice and Order to Correct

L&I File Number: CF-2025-058495

VIOLATIONS		
PHILA. CODE § F-912.4.1	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE The fire code official is authorized to require locking caps on fire department connections for water-based fire protection systems where the responding fire department carries appropriate key wrenches for removal.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Replace missing FDC caps		
LOCATION Side Exterior		
PHILA. CODE § PM15-302.1	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE All exterior property and premises must be maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition and free from any accumulation of rubbish or garbage.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Cleanup the trash and debris around the grounds.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		
PHILA. CODE § PM15-302.4	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE All premises and exterior property shall be maintained free from weeds or plant growth in excess of 10". All noxious weeds shall be prohibited. Weeds shall be defined as all grasses, annual plants and vegetation, other than trees or shrubs provided; however, this term shall not include cultivated flowers and gardens. Failure to comply with the notice of violation, any duly authorized employee of the jurisdiction or contractor hired by the jurisdiction shall be authorized to enter upon the property in violation and cut and destroy the weeds growing thereon, and the costs of such removal shall be paid by the owner or agent responsible for the property.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Cut the overgrown weeds and vegetation around the grounds.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		

Violation Notice and Order to Correct

L&I File Number: CF-2025-058495

VIOLATIONS

PHILA. CODE § F-311.2.2	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE Fire alarm, sprinkler and standpipe systems shall be maintained in an operable condition at all times.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Fire protection systems must be maintained as if the building were occupied.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		

PHILA. CODE § F-901.6.4	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE The testing of fire protection systems shall be in accordance with Sections 901.6 and F-901.6.4 through F-901.6.4.8.1. Annually the owner of each building that contains fire protection systems shall have such systems certified as operating properly by a person certified or licensed by the Department of Licenses and Inspections to provide such certifications in accordance with this Section. Certification forms shall be maintained on the property and made available for inspection upon the request of a fire code official. The certification form shall be submitted to the Department of Licenses and Inspections which may, by regulation, establish a fee to be paid upon submission of the form.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Have licensed contractor test and certify the fire alarm system in the building, and upload certification paperwork to eCLIPSE.phila.gov. This must be done annually.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		

Violation Notice and Order to Correct

L&I File Number: CF-2025-058495

VIOLATIONS		
PHILA. CODE § F-903.5	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE Sprinkler systems shall be tested and maintained in accordance with Section 901.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Have licensed contractor test and certify the fire alarm system in the building, and upload certification paperwork to eCLIPSE.phila.gov. This must be done annually.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		

PHILA. CODE § PM15-302.9	FINE AMOUNT \$300.00	SCAN QR CODE FOR HOW TO RESOLVE 
PHILA. CODE LANGUAGE Markings, carvings, or graffiti on the exterior of the property must be removed by the owner. The exterior surface must be returned to an approved state of maintenance and repair.		
CONDITION IN VIOLATION Remove all graffiti from the building.		
LOCATION 13-17 S. 7th St.		



Failure to timely correct the violations listed above by or before the correction date listed above will result in the stated fine amount being imposed against you. The fines will be imposed on a per day basis for each violation that remains uncorrected AFTER the stated correction date. Phila. Code § A-601. If you timely correct each violation by the stated correction date, no fines will be due.

In addition to the fines listed above, failure to timely correct the violations will result in you being charged:

- Labor and material costs for any work performed by the City, such as a demolition; sealing of windows or doors; clearing of weeds, trash or debris; relocation expenses for removing occupants, costs associated with cease operations orders. Such costs are subject to an additional administrative fee of 21% (Phila. Code § A-503);
- An additional \$100 fee for repeat abatement work (Phila. Code § A-503.2); and
- Reinspection fees as follows: \$100 for the third inspection, \$200 for the fourth inspection, and \$350 for any additional inspections (Phila. Code § A-901.12.2).

Violation Notice and Order to Correct

L&I File Number: CF-2025-058495



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL THIS NOTICE. YOUR APPEAL MUST BE FILED BY 07/18/2025.

IF YOU DO NOT TIMELY FILE AN APPEAL THEN YOU WAIVE YOUR RIGHT TO LATER CHALLENGE ANY PART OF THIS NOTICE. This includes waiving your right to argue: whether the violations existed, whether you were responsible to correct the violations, whether you had enough time to correct the violations, whether the City should have abated the violations, and whether the City can impose fines, fees, or costs against you.

For more information on filing an appeal and/or to obtain the approved form visit the appeals section of the Department of Licenses and Inspections website at www.phila.gov/li or the Boards Administration Unit, Concourse Municipal Services Building, 1401 J.F.K. Blvd., Philadelphia PA.

Appeals of the Technical Codes, such as the Zoning Code and/or Fire Code, need to be submitted to the appropriate Technical Appeal Board such as the Zoning Board of Adjustment and/or the Board of Safety and Fire Prevention. For additional information call 215-686-8686.

IF YOU HAVE ANY LEGAL QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH AN ATTORNEY.

If you do not have an attorney, you can contact the Philadelphia Bar Association Referral and Information Line at 215-238-6333 to have an attorney referred to you. You can also find a list of legal aid service providers at <http://palegalaid.net/legal-aid-providers-in-pa>.



The Philadelphia Code may be found online for free at www.phila.gov under "Open government."

If you have any questions regarding this notice or would like to schedule a re-inspection, please contact: William Smith
William.M.Smith@phila.gov or the district office noted above.

ATTENTION: This is an important notice! For information in your language, call 215-686-8686

ATENCIÓN: ¡Este es un aviso importante! Para recibir información en su idioma, llame al 215-686-8686

注意: 这是重要通知! 如果您需要以您的语言获得此信息, 请致电 215-686-8686

CHÚ Ý: Đây là thông báo quan trọng! Nếu bạn cần thư này bằng ngôn ngữ khác, vui lòng gọi 215-686-8686

주의: 중요 통지입니다! 이 서신을 귀하의 언어로 받고 싶으시면 215-686-8686번으로 전화하시기 바랍니다

توجہ فرمائیں: یہ ایک ضروری اطلاع نامہ ہے! ترجمے کی خدمات کے لیے 215-686-8686 پر کال کریں

ATTENTION : Cet avis est important ! Si vous avez besoin de cet avis dans une autre langue, appelez le 215-686-8686

Appendix C - L&I Violation Status



An official website of the City of Philadelphia government [Here's how you know](#)

Property History

Permits, licenses, violations & appeals by address

STANDARD

CASE NUMBER: **CF-2025-058495**

L&I District: **CENTRAL EAST**

OPA Account #: **781558300**

13-17 S 7TH ST

Philadelphia, PA 19106-2313

IN VIOLATION

[Applicable codes index](#)

Case number	CF-2025-058495
Priority	STANDARD
Date added	Jun 13, 2025
Date updated	Jun 13, 2025
Resolution date	Not Available
Documents*	Notice of Violation Report

*Violation notices on cases that complied prior to June 27, 2024 are not available here.

Violation number: VI-2025-044046 - PM15-302.9



Code	PM15-302.9
Type	EXTERIOR AREA GRAFFITI
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN



Property History

Permits, licenses, violations & appeals by address

Code	F-903.5 i
Type	SUPPRESSION SYSTEM TESTING & MAINTENANCE
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044042 - F-901.6.4 [×](#)

Code	F-901.6.4 i
Type	PERIODIC TESTING
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044040 - F-311.2.2 [×](#)

Code	F-311.2.2 i
Type	FIRE PROTECTION VACANT BUILDING
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044034 - PM15-302.4 [×](#)

Code	PM15-302.4 i
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Property History

Permits, licenses, violations & appeals by address

Status OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044033 - PM15-302.1 [×](#)

Code	PM15-302.1 i
Type	EXTERIOR AREA SANITATION
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044032 - F-912.4.1 [×](#)

Code	F-912.4.1 i
Type	FDC LOCKING CAPS
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN

Violation number: VI-2025-044031 - PM15-304.7 [×](#)

Code	PM15-304.7 i
Type	EXTERIOR STRUCTURE ROOF DRAINAGE
Date	Jun 12, 2025
Status	OPEN



An official website of the City of Philadelphia government [Here's how you know](#)

Property History

Permits, licenses, violations & appeals by address

Date	Case #	Status
Jun 13, 2025	CF-2025-058495	FAILED

One record