

Preservation Pennsylvania announces 2024 Pennsylvania At Risk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- The statewide nonprofit dedicated to historic preservation has listed three historic places to its annual “Pennsylvania At Risk” listing. Each is threatened with demolition.

- D. C. Herbst House (Allegheny County)
- Old Montgomery County Prison, also known as Airy Street Jail (Montgomery County)
- State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh (SCI-P), also known as Western Penitentiary (Allegheny County)

“Each of the buildings on this year’s At Risk share a common theme: they are perceived as no longer useful to their owners. Yet each is ripe with potential for reuse,” said Preservation Pennsylvania’s Executive Director, Mindy Crawford. “Saving the craftsmanship, saving the materials from a landfill, saving the distinctive architectural contribution to the streetscape are all good reasons to preserve. Imagine pointing to any of these revived buildings 50 years from now and saying ‘I remember when they wanted to tear that down.’”

Preservation Pennsylvania partners with local advocates, promotes the calls to action for each property, and provides additional services and support such as letters of support for Keystone Grant and other funding applications or connecting partners with helpful site-specific expertise.

As the only statewide nonprofit dedicated to helping people protect and preserve the historic places they love, Pennsylvania At Risk has been part of the organization’s mission since 1992.

2024 Pennsylvania At Risk

Allegheny County



D. C. Herbst House, Sewickley (Allegheny County)

The Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh filed for a demolition permit in July 2022. While the Sewickley Borough Council and Historic Review Commission voted to uphold the historic district ordinances, the Diocese appealed their decision. In December 2023, the appellate court remanded the case back to the Borough and Diocese with the aim of mediation towards an agreed resolution. Both the Borough and Diocese counsel are hopeful for new, productive discussions that will lead to an agreement.



State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh (SCI-P), also known as **Western State Penitentiary** (Allegheny County)

The Western State Penitentiary was built between 1878 and 1893. The Pennsylvania Department of General Services plans to demolish the entire complex. However, there is hope that the Warden's house (built 1885) could be retained and reused. One of the options suggested in a feasibility study proposed a 5.2 acre waterfront park that could

incorporate the Warden's House, ripe for adaptive reuse along the Ohio River and the 33-mile Three Rivers Heritage Trail, used by pedestrians, cyclists and non-vehicular commuters.

Montgomery County



Old Montgomery County Prison, Norristown (Montgomery County)

This 1851 "castle on a hill" was designed by architect Napoleon LeBrun, who also designed the county courthouse on the same block. While the courthouse is scheduled for restoration, the gothic revival prison building was proposed for full demolition. A grassroots advocacy group has been advocating for its reuse. County planning staff, working with Preservation Pennsylvania and the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia convinced the County Commissions to withdraw the plan to demolish and commission a study for reuse. A Request for Expressions of Interest (REI) will be released at a future date. A survey is available until July 25

to gain public input about the future of the site: Visit <https://engage.montgomerycountypa.gov/en/>

About Preservation Pennsylvania

Preservation Pennsylvania is the Commonwealth's only private statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people protect and preserve the historic places that matter to them.

Preservation Pennsylvania was established by the Commonwealth's General Assembly in 1982 as the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania, a statewide revolving fund to assist in the acquisition and rehabilitation of historic properties. Since then, Preservation Pennsylvania has grown into its role as a private, nonprofit membership organization with a statewide mission to protect and preserve Pennsylvania's irreplaceable historic places.

The organization assists individuals, organizations, corporations, and governmental agencies from across the Commonwealth in their own preservation-related efforts, through a dynamic scope of activities and services. Whether as a leader, partner, or advisor, Preservation Pennsylvania works to secure the future of the past through educational outreach workshops and events, legislative advocacy, advisory and technical assistance in the field, and other special initiatives.

Photos and more information at preservationpa.org Contact: Sabra Smith ssmith@preservationpa.org