

**NOMINATION OF THE ROSLYN PLACE HOMES
TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT**

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



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ROSLYN PLACE HOMES - HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

Name of Property Roslyn Place Homes
Address of Property 506-523 and 525 Roslyn Place, lot and block numbers **Property**
Owner Various
Nominated by:..... Matthew Falcone
Date Received:..... 13 October 2017
Parcel No.: 51-S-165, 168, 168-A, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173-0-1,174,175,176,
167, 177, 178, 179, 180, 184, and 183
Ward:..... 8th
Zoning Classification:..... R1-AH
Neighborhood:..... Shadyside
Council District:..... 8

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (1 November 2017)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (6 December 2017)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (6 December 2017)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (5 December 2017)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (9 January 2018)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:

6. Conduct a public hearing
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the Historic Designation

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FACTS

1. On 13 October, 2017, the staff of the Historic Review Commission received an application for the nomination of the Roslyn Place Homes to be designated as a City Historic District.

2. **Description of the Roslyn Place Homes** *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

Roslyn Place is a residential neighborhood surrounding a Nicholson-paved street located in Pittsburgh's Shadyside neighborhood. The street is a small cul-de-sac that extends north for roughly two hundred and fifty (250) feet from Ellsworth Avenue between S. Aiken Avenue and S. Graham Street and measures roughly eighteen-and-a-half (18 ½) feet across. The district is roughly bounded by Ellsworth Avenue on the South, small parcels of land that abut the Martin Luther King Jr. East Busway on the North, and by several privately-owned properties on east and west.

This district is comprised of 18 lots in 10 independent buildings. All buildings in the district are constructed in a Colonial Revival architectural style with heavily Georgian influences and are two-and-a-half stories in height. With the exception of one building with a stucco façade, all are faced with red brick, trimmed with wood, and have a pitched, slate roof interrupted by one or more dormers. While the houses look similar there are, in fact, five architectural variations.

The properties of the eastern and western side of Roslyn Place have a small yard that fronts the street. A wrought-iron, decorative fence divides the properties of Roslyn Place from Ellsworth Ave. and two posts with iron plaques reading "Roslyn Place" flank the entryway to the street.

3. **History of the Roslyn Place Homes** *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The 1872 and 1890 plat maps identify the lot that would become Roslyn Place as belonging to J.W. Friday, which contained a main house made of wood occupying the center of the lot and four wooden outbuildings. The 1904 plat map shows that this same property now belonged to "Thos. Rodd" and the adjacent property to the southwest, which was the home of the Rodd family, belonged to "M.W. Rodd". The 1911 plat map shows that ownership of the two properties remain the same but interestingly, two additional lines, which roughly match the current location of Roslyn Place appear in pencil over on the map itself.

In 1914 City Council passed ordinance No. 181, which "...approving and accepting Roslyn Place Plan of Lots, in the Seventh ward of the City of Pittsburgh, laid out by Thomas Rodd, May 1913, and approving and accepting Roslyn Place shown therein." Later that same year ordinance No. 240 was passed "Authorizing the purchase from Thomas Rodd, Jr., of a water pipe line laid by him on Roslyn place in the Seventh ward of the City of Pittsburgh," which indicates the progress and level of modern convenience provided for the new development. The construction of homes along the street occurred over the next two years and the first advertisements for the new development would be published prior to the construction of Roslyn Place.

According to long-time neighbors, the houses on Roslyn Place would remain rental properties until the 1950s when individual homes were sold to private owners.

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4. Significance of the Roslyn Place Homes *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. The nominator is of the opinion that the Roslyn Place Homes meet several of the criteria as follows.

Criterion 2: Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history of development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States

Thomas Rodd was born in London, England and immigrated to America with his parents at age five. He studied at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis before serving as an officer in the navy during the Civil War. After the war he served in the City Engineer's Office in Philadelphia before joining the Pennsylvania Railroad (P.R.R.) Company in 1872 as a rodman. He would serve in a multitude of engineering positions in the P.R.R. and in 1889 was appointed chief engineer to all lines west of Pittsburgh. It was at this time that Mr. Rodd moved to the city, where he and his family would play an important role in shaping several of Pittsburgh's cultural institutions.

In Pittsburgh Rodd and his family became prominent members of the city's social elite. He became a member of the Pittsburgh Club, the Duquesne Club, the Allegheny County Club, the Pittsburgh Golf Club, the University Club of Pittsburgh, the Metropolitan Club of New York and the Chicago Club. As a sign of the Rodd family's social status in Pittsburgh, their vacations and the work travel of Mr. Rodd were frequently reported in prominent Pittsburgh newspapers. The destinations listed also help provide a context for the Thomas Rodd, and the Rodd family's social standing, as they traveled to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Paris, West Virginia's White Sulpher Springs, Florida, Lakewood, N.Y., and Watch Hill, R.I. The Rodd family's social activities within Pittsburgh were also frequently reported and their association with other prominent Pittsburgh families like the Howes, Childs, and Laughlins again helps to contextualize their social standing.

The Rodd family also played a significant role in the construction, and religious life, of the Church of the Ascension. In addition to contributing to the building's general construction funds in 1898, the Rodd family contributed to several different memorials within the church itself. Top among these is the stained glass window dedicated to their deceased son, a plaque commemorating the members of the congregation who perished in World War I, and the churches unique antiphonal organ.

Criterion 3: Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship

The houses of Roslyn Place are an excellent example of Colonial Revival, especially Georgian Revival, architectural design. According to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission:

The Colonial Revival style was an effort to look back to the Federal and Georgian architecture of America's founding period for design inspiration. This enthusiasm to explore the architecture of America's founding period was generated in part by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 celebrating the country's 100th birthday. This trend was further promoted by the Columbian Exposition of 1893, held in Chicago.

Like most revival efforts, the Colonial Revival style did not generally produce true copies of earlier styles. Although, in the early years of the 20th century (1915-1935) there was a real interest in studying and duplicating Georgian period architecture. Generally, the Colonial Revival style took certain design elements - front façade symmetry, front entrance fanlights and sidelights, pedimented doorways, porches and dormers - and applied them to larger scale buildings. These colonial era details could be combined in a great variety of ways, creating many subtypes within this style.

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Roslyn Place is also noted for its exceptional example of a Nicolson Pavement street, which is, itself, a City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark.

Examples of Colonial Revival, particularly Georgian Revival, architecture within the City of Pittsburgh are rare with the Pitt Building (208 Smithfield St., Downtown) designed by Edward Lee in 1918 (altered in 1921) being, perhaps, the most notable example. The Allegheny Harvard-Yale-Princeton Club (617-619 William Penn Place, Downtown) and The Allegheny Elks Lodge #339 also designed by Edward Lee (the latter is a building remodel) are also notable for incorporated Federal elements in their design. The former Overbrook Municipal Building, currently under consideration for City Historic Landmark status, has been identified, in part for its exceptional Colonial Revival design.

What is exceptional about Roslyn Place regarding Colonial Revival design is the scale, uniformity, and quality of the design. Elements of Georgian Revival design in Roslyn Place can be seen in the symmetry of the facades, the use of brick, hemispherical hoods, pedimented porches on 511, 513, 515, and 517 Roslyn Place, and coffered design elements on the hoods and porches. The consistency of design throughout all houses help to create a sense of space within the district itself.

Criterion 4: Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history of development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States

Thomas Rodd made significant architectural and engineering contributions to Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other points west. He was an active member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, and the Engineer's Society of Western Pennsylvania. As Chief Engineer for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Rodd had the opportunity to design and create important structures across Western Pennsylvania and the Midwest. While many of the structures he designed no longer exist, records exist of some of his more notable works. Among these is the passenger station for East Liverpool, Oh. and the passenger station for Wilmerding, Pa.. Of Rodd's remaining existing work, the Indianapolis' Union Station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Roslyn Place (street) is listed as a City of Pittsburgh historic landmark.

Rodd also owned and operated his own design and engineering business outside of his work with the P.R.R. through which he designed several notable structures around Western Pennsylvania and in the City of Pittsburgh. Perhaps most significant among these designs was a collaboration with Frederick Osterling on the Westinghouse Building that stood at the corner of Penn Ave. & 9th Street, in downtown Pittsburgh. Rodd is also responsible for designing the Union Switch & Signal Company plant in Swissvale, the Westinghouse Forge & Steel Casting Plant in East Pittsburgh, and the Westinghouse Machine Shops in Brinton, Pa. Rodd also collaborated with Frederick Osterling in the design and creation of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company General Office Building in Wilmerding, Pa.

Criterion 5: Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;

Roslyn Place is an exemplification of an important planning and urban design technique distinguished by rarity, uniqueness, and overall quality of design. Roslyn Place features prominently in *Great Streets*, a comprehensive book on the relationship between design, communities, and urban planning. In the book, Allan Jacobs recognizes Roslyn Place's unique design in stating:

All the smallness and closeness – but closeness with enough room for healthy, even gracious living – makes for a density that is greater than would be permitted for the same type of housing (remember, these are single-family houses) in most of the urban United States: some 14 dwellings per gross acre (including the street). That density means there are a lot of people around. It means that public transit can be supported; it means that small stores within walking distance are likely to survive; and

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they do, on Walnut Street, a block away; and that schools, too, can be close. It means, in short, community, or at least the change of a community.

Criterion 10: Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh

Roslyn Place meets this criterion in that it is a familiar visual feature of the City of Pittsburgh and in Shadyside. The neighborhood is regularly featured in the media, travel guides, and neighborhood tours of Shadyside. While it is perhaps most noted and recognizable for housing the only remaining wooden street in Pittsburgh, Roslyn Place is remarkable for the sense of place created by the uniformity of design and unique style. Among residents of Shadyside, Roslyn Place has regularly featured on neighborhood house tours and as residents can attest to, remains a popular tourist attraction in the city.

5. Integrity

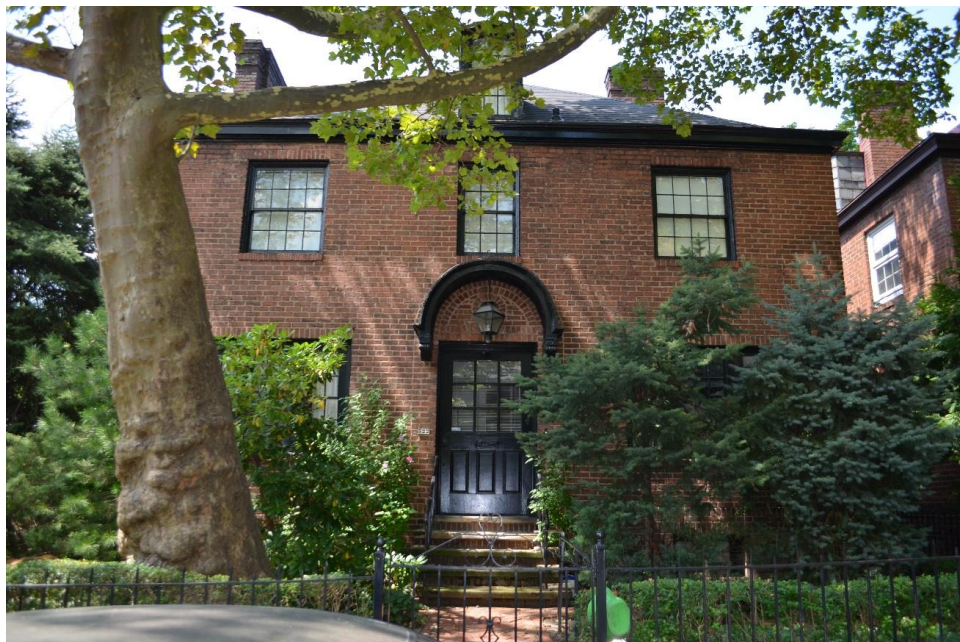
Roslyn Place maintains a high degree of integrity. Specifically:

- **Location:** Roslyn Place remains in its original location.
- **Design:** The homes of Roslyn Place retain their overall design with minor modifications to the engaged front porches and entryways of most homes.
- **Setting:** The setting of Roslyn Place has changed since first constructed in that the adjacent single-family homes of the Rodds and the Osterlings have been replaced with multi-unit housing. The neighborhood remains primarily residential in nature.
- **Materials:** The district retains a high degree of material integrity. The brick facades of the homes have been maintained. 521 Roslyn Place was originally conceived as a frame house and was stuccoed in the 1920s (and remains so today).
- **Workmanship :** Roslyn Place continues to evoke a sense of workmanship as when the homes were first constructed.
- **Feeling:** Roslyn Place maintains a high degree of integrity of feeling. As a community it maintains the same “feel” as it was first constructed in part because of the continued existence of the Nicolson Pavement. Aside from modern cars and the old growth trees, on any given day the street looks remarkably similar to when first created in 1914.
- **Association:** Roslyn Place maintains a direct association to where and when the community was it was first designed and constructed by Thomas Rodd.

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6. Photos



522 Roslyn Place, Primary Façade. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



512 Roslyn Place, Primary Façade. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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508 Roslyn Place, Primary Façade. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



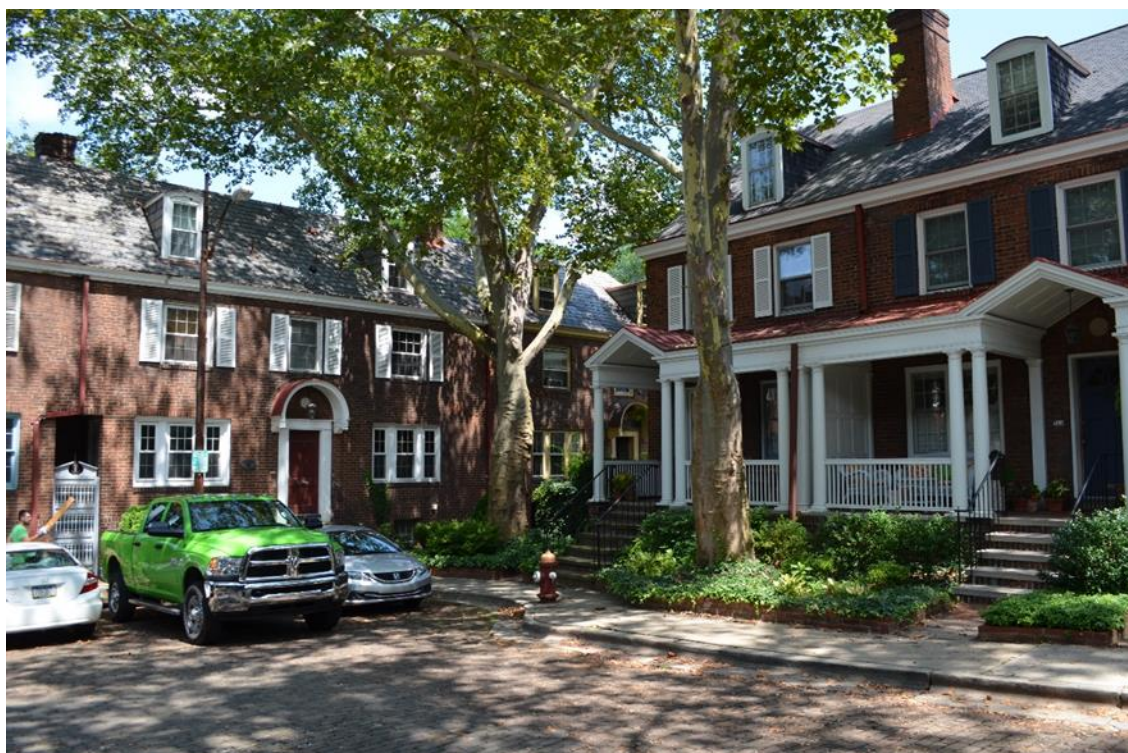
511 Roslyn Place, Primary Façade. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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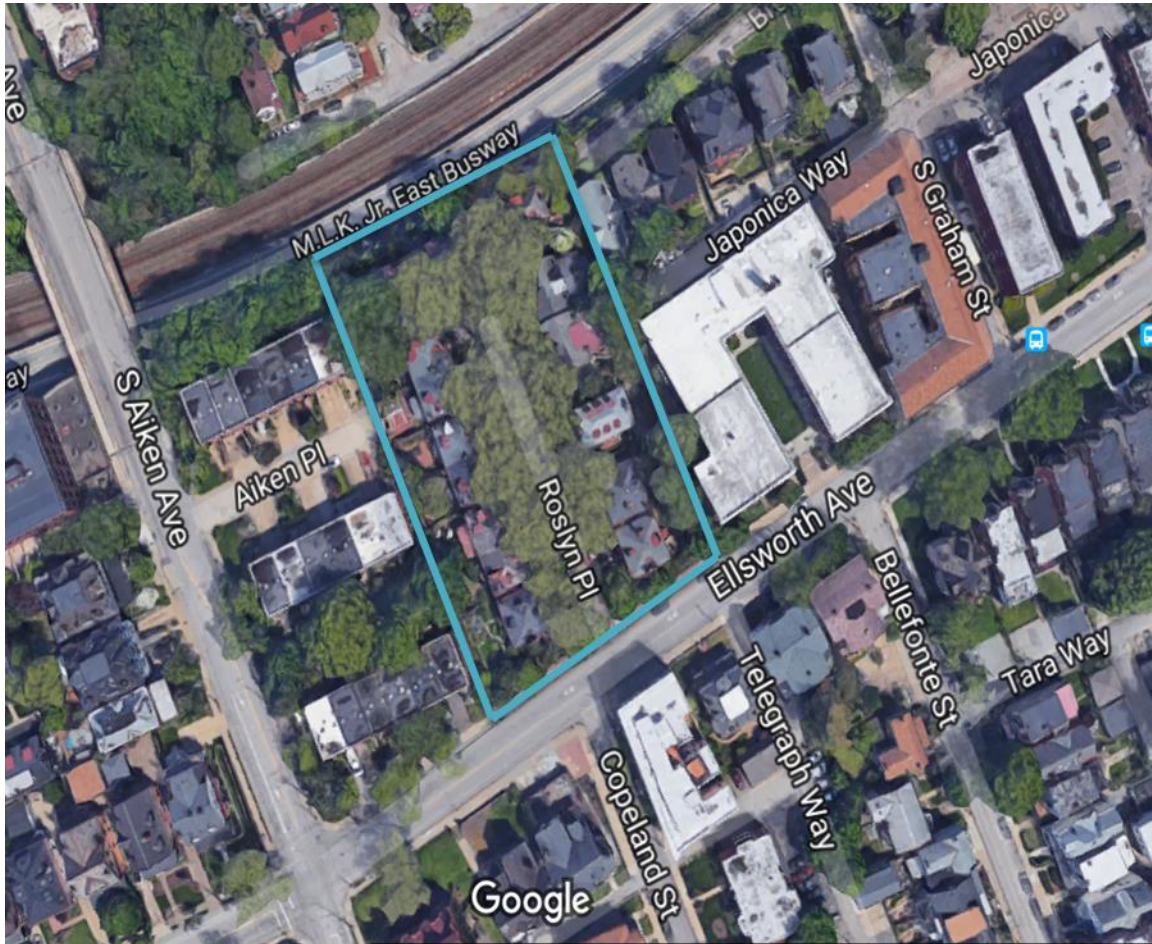
506, 507, 508, 509, & 511 Roslyn Place. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



508, 508, 511, & 513 Roslyn Place. August 1, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.

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Roslyn Place Homes District Boundaries

8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of the Roslyn Place Homes. On December 6, 2017 the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate the Roslyn Place Homes as a historic district.

9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation the Roslyn Place Homes. On January 9, 2018 the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate the Roslyn Place Homes as a historic district.

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10. Meeting Minutes

HRC MINUTES – NOVEMBER 1, 2017 – PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING

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Pittsburgh HRC – November 1, 2017

Roslyn Place Homes

Historic District Nomination

Owner:

Various

Ward: 7th

Lot and Block: Various

Nominator:

Matthew Falcone

Inspector:

Council District:

Nomination Received: 10/13/17

National Register Status: **Listed:** **X** **Eligible:**

Proposed Changes: Nomination for designation of a historic district.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Quinn makes a short presentation on the nomination. She states that the district is significant under **Criterion 2**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, **Criterion 3**, **Criterion 4**, identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 5**, exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail, and **Criterion 10**, unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh. She states that the Commission will be making a preliminary determination of eligibility today.
 2. Mr. Serrao agrees with the criteria listed and asks for a motion.
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Motion:

1. Mr. Gastil moves to accept the nomination.
 2. Mr. Harless seconds.
 3. Mr. Hogan asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.
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HRC MINUTES – DECEMBER 6, 2017 RECOMMENDATION

NOMINATION OF THE ROSLYN PLACE HOMES
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Pittsburgh HRC – November 1, 2017

Roslyn Place Homes

Historic District Nomination

Owner:
Various

Ward: 7th

Lot and Block: Various

Nominator:
Matthew Falcone

Inspector:

Council District:

Nomination Received: 10/13/17

National Register Status: **Listed:** **X** **Eligible:**

Proposed Changes: Nomination for designation of a historic district.

Discussion:

3. Mr. Hogan asks for public testimony.
 4. Mr. Ned Schano steps to the podium. He lives in the district and thanks the Commission for considering the application. He states that all of his neighbors are enthusiastic about the nomination as well.
 5. Mr. Hogan asks for additional testimony; there is none. He states that there was no opposition to the nomination. He states that the nomination meets several of the criteria for designation, specifically **Criterion 2**, identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, **Criterion 4**, identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 5**, exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design or detail, and **Criterion 10**, unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh. He makes a recommendation that the HRC makes a positive recommendation on the nomination to Planning Commission and City Council.
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Motion:

4. Mr. Harless moves.
 5. Mr. Hogan seconds.
 6. Mr. Hogan asks for a vote; all present are in favor and motion carries.
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PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES –JANUARY 9, 2018

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January 9, 2018 2

B. CORRESPONDENCE (See Attachment A for staff reports.) Ms. Mondor stated that the Commission was in receipt of correspondence from City Council. • Referral from City Council – Bill #2017-2256, C-828, Petition #800 • Referral from City Council – Bill #2017-2264, C-829, Petition #801 C. DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS (See Attachment B for staff reports.)

1. Hearing and Action: Historic Nomination: Roslyn Place Ms. Quinn made a presentation in accord with the attached staff report. Ms. Quinn recommended approval of the proposal. Ms. Quinn gave information on Roslyn Place stated that it comprised of 18 lots with 10 independent buildings. All buildings in the district are constructed in a Colonial Revival architectural style with heavily Georgian influences and are two and a half stories in height. While all the houses look similar there are five architectural variations. She also reviewed the criteria for designation and Roslyn Place does meet the criteria and integrity standards for listing as a city-designated historic structure and requests that the commissioners make an affirmative recommendation.
2. The Chairwoman called for comments from the Public. Matthew Falcone of Preservation Pittsburgh the researcher and nominator of Roslyn Place. He supports the nomination and read a passage from Allen Jacobs of Great Streets. He stated that Roslyn Place is beautiful and is an exceptional part of Pittsburgh. Every neighbor on the street supported the nomination.
3. There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commissioners. Ms. Detrick thanked the staff for the nomination and it's terrific to put the houses on historic nomination is fantastic. There being no more questions or comments from the Commissioners, the Chairwoman called for the motion.
4. MOTION: That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh provides City Council with an affirmative recommendation for historic designation.