



Archives

OCTOBER
2025

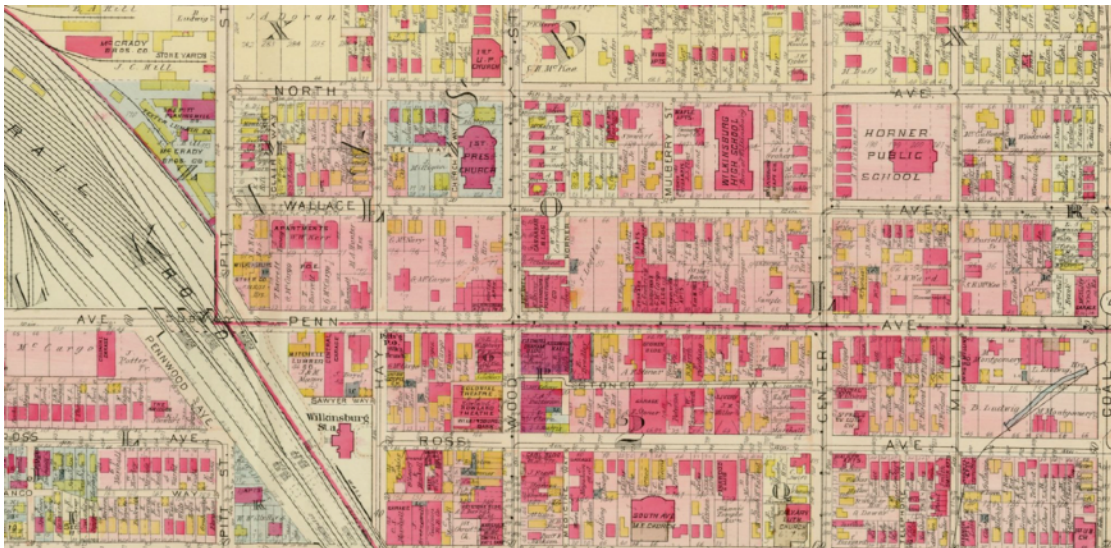
WILKINSBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 31, ISSUE 8

Wilkinsburg National Register of Historic Places designation - What's next?

Wilkinsburg's business district, the Penn Avenue and Wood Street corridors, has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2018. This Historic Designation was awarded after Borough officials, PHLF (Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation) leaders and PA State Historic Preservation Office staff painstakingly researched the entire central Wilkinsburg area to see if there were enough historic buildings and architecture with a high degree of physical integrity to be eligible. The seventy-eight page application was submitted for review in 2018. The good news is the PA Historical and Museum Commission determined that Wilkinsburg had many significant historic buildings in the central business district. The application was then submitted to the National Park Service for review. The Wilkinsburg Historic District was given the important designation to be on the National Register of Historic Places.

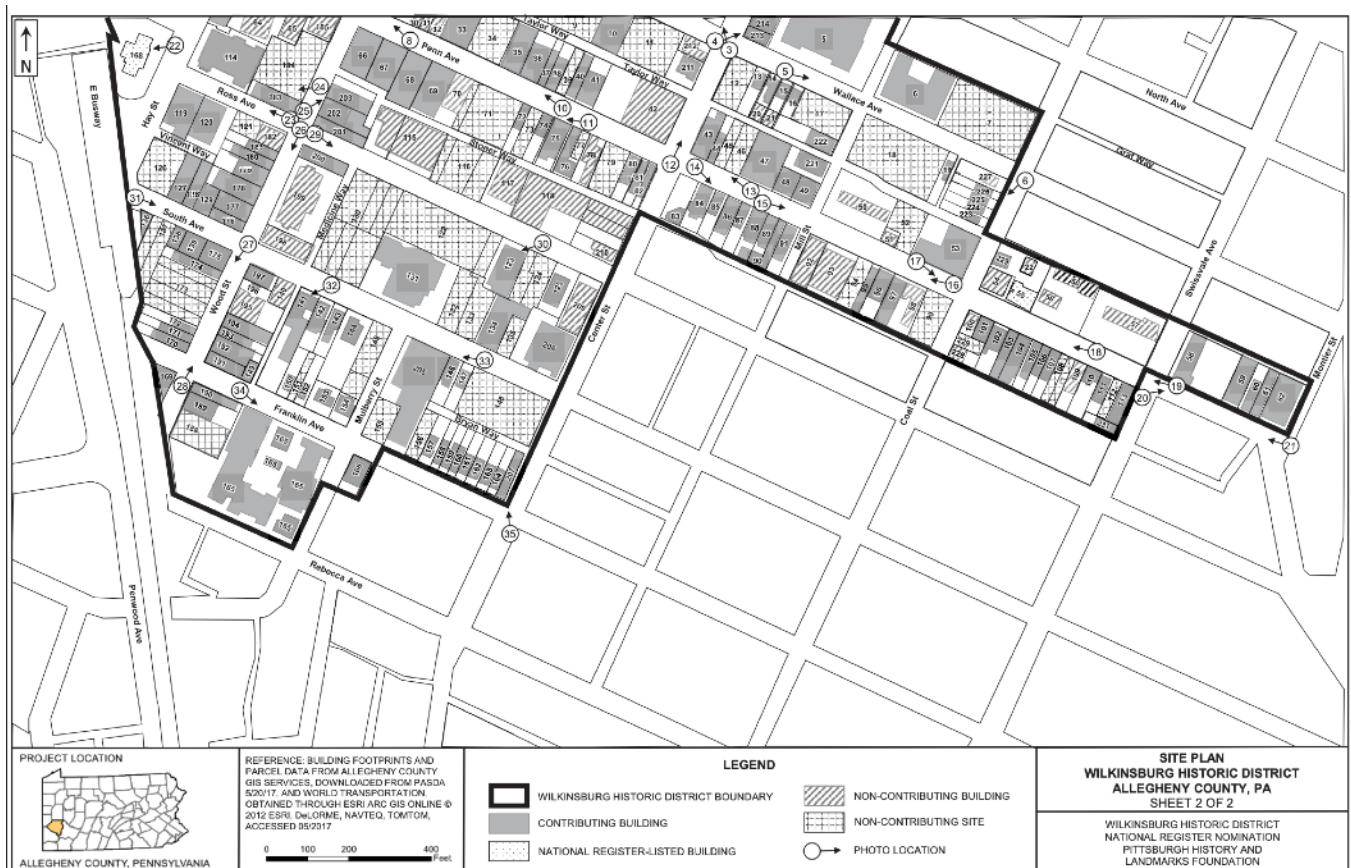
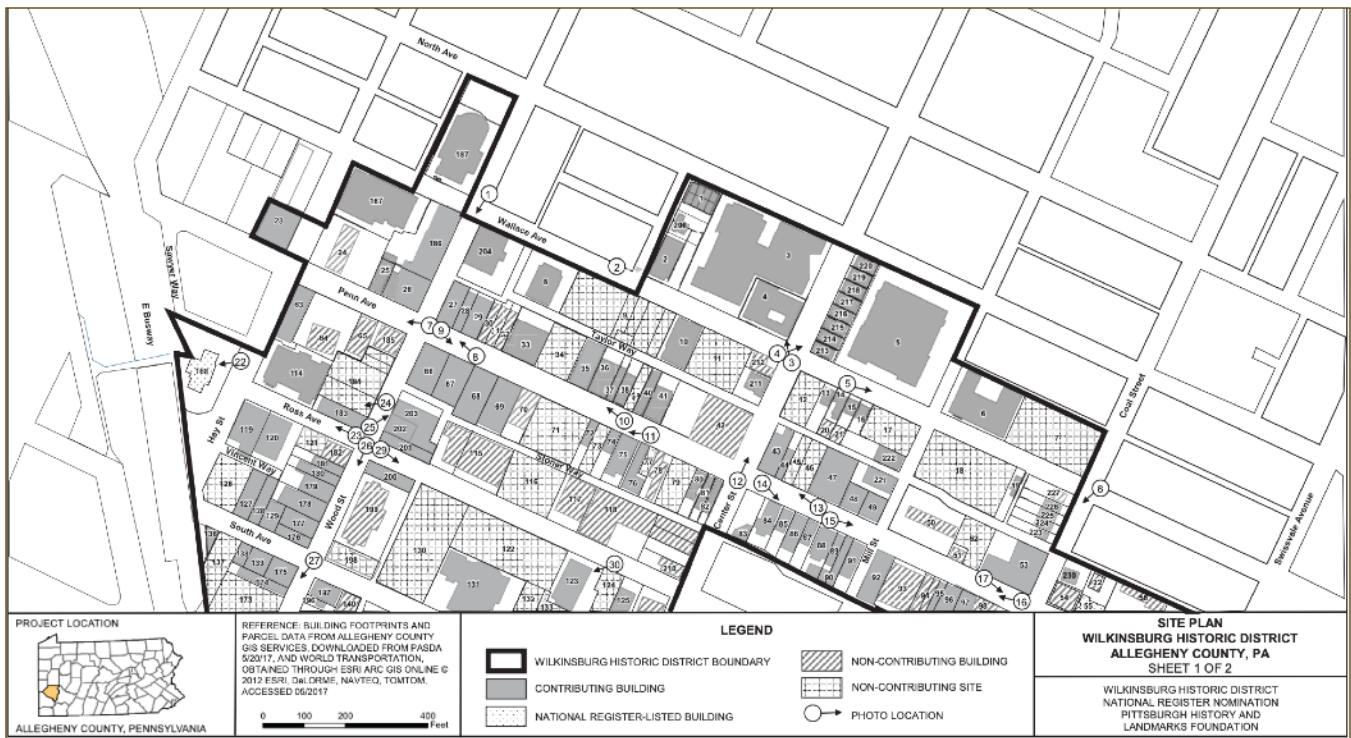
It is necessary to explain what National Register means to property owners and to the community. WHAT is Historic Designation? The property must be at least 50 years old. It must be significant, and fit into architectural and/or historic criteria and have a high degree of physical integrity. **National Register designation does not impose restrictions on private property. It does not protect privately-owned historic properties. It does not trigger federal/state reviews. It does not trigger local design review. It does not require property owners to maintain their property in any given way.**

The National Register **DOES**: Create an excellent planning tool for property owners and community leaders. It provides recognition to historic properties and encourages their preservation. It promotes community and economic development and tourism and provides basic eligibility for financial incentives. This 1915 map (historicpgh.org Hopkins Maps, Volume 8, plate 1) shows a large portion of the Historic District. Brick structures are in red, wood frame buildings are in yellow. Next page shows the 1887 map of the entire Historic District.





This 1887 Hopkins map of Wilkinsburg shows the **Wilkinsburg Historic District** outlined in red. Note that Main Street later was renamed Penn Avenue. 1887 was the year Wilkinsburg was incorporated so many lots were unimproved and few had brick or stone buildings.



These two site plan maps show the Wilksburg structures which were included in the 2017 Historic District study. See the Legend which distinguishes the boundary, contributing buildings, National Register listed buildings, non-contributing buildings, and photo location. You will need to open the Historic District 2018 PDF to see the photos and postcards which show the buildings, pages 78-94. This is a separate document sent with Oct. 2025 Archives.

In 2018 the National Register of Historic Places approved the nomination for the Wilkinsburg Historic District. This designation has enabled local government and non-profits in the historic area to access funding opportunities available through the State. The Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation (WCDC) has utilized many of the funding options to restore important buildings in the Wilkinsburg business district. The historic Wilkinsburg Train Station at 901 Hay Street and the Lohr Building at 729 Wood Street are two of the prominent building projects which the WCDC applied for and received state grant funding. For the Train Station project the WCDC was the recipient of the highly regarded PA State Historic Preservation Office 2021 Community Initiative Award.

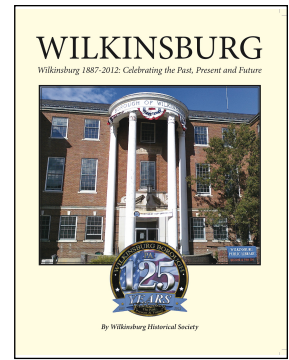
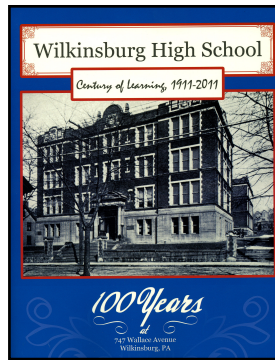
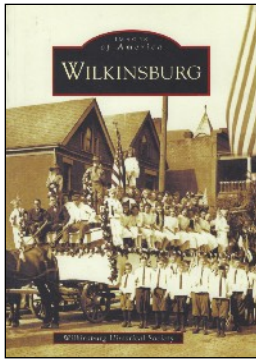
The Borough of Wilkinsburg has also availed itself of preservation funds from the State. The National Register inclusion allows publicly accessible historic resources as well as non-profits to apply for State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) grants. Some of these funds require matching money, and requirements vary. Here is a list of some of the PA SHPO programs:

Certified Local Government Program
Community Preservation Program
Education and Outreach
Environmental Review
Historic Property Inspection Program
Historic Tax Credit Program
Historical Marker Program
Keystone Historic Preservation Grants
National Register of Historic Places
PA-SHARE (PA State Historic and Archaeological Resource Exchange)
Survey Programs

National Registry designation indicates that historic properties are worthy of preservation. However, it is important for the Wilkinsburg community of residents and business owners to provide their input and vision for what the future of Wilkinsburg will be. Wilkinsburg Borough leaders and Council have a Comprehensive Plan 2025 underway with Phase one, "Articulating a Vision," from June 2025 until December 2025. This is to discover a shared vision for the future, verified by lived experiences and supported by data. Phase 2, "Developing a Plan" runs from January 2026 through June 2026 and will include a shared definition for what success and impact means for Wilkinsburg. Phase 3 of the Wilkinsburg Comprehensive Plan 2025 runs from July 2026 through November 2026 and is "Launching Into Action", a shared plan for collective action and resources to get things done. This is an additional opportunity for the people of Wilkinsburg to let their voices be heard, participate in planning for the future of the Borough and to help raise awareness of the unique history of the community.

Wilkinsburg Borough has created the 2025 Comprehensive Plan with the option for citizens to take a survey about experiences in the community and what issues matter most. An additional survey asks about the places that are most important for you and for Wilkinsburg's future. The Comprehensive Plan committee needs the input of everyone. The survey can be found at wilkinsburgpa.gov under "projects and initiatives". As the Borough has stated: "This Plan will outline the types of investments we will prioritize....It will guide decision-making and investment over the next 10-20 years. The plan will address the following topics:

1. Housing (affordable, high-quality living options),
2. Economic Development (a thriving business district),
3. Transportation (Continuous, safe and comfortable travel options)
4. Public-Realm Infrastructure (Parks, utilities, and plazas for quality of life)



These are the three books that the **Wilkinsburg Historical Society** wrote and published during the past twelve years. They help to promote and preserve the history of Wilkinsburg and raise funds for the various projects of the Society. All three books are still available to purchase from the Society. Another way to support the activities of the Historical Society.

On the far left is ***“Images of America - Wilkinsburg”***, a 128 page soft-bound book printed by the Arcadia Publishing Company. It includes over 220 black and white photos depicting the history of our town from the early land patents in the late 1700s up to the 75th celebration of Wilkinsburg in 1962. The book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$20.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The middle book above is ***“Wilkinsburg High School - Century of Learning 1911-2011”***. This book chronicles the history of the local high school from its early start in the late 1880s, the creation of the magnificent structure in 1910, and each decade since with highlights of the events that were important in the lives of the students and the Wilkinsburg community. For over 100 years the Wilkinsburg High School served the Borough of Wilkinsburg students and this book has several hundred photos showing much of this important history. This *Century of Learning* book is available from the Wilkinsburg Historical Society for \$15.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

The book on the far right is ***“Wilkinsburg - 1887-2012, Celebrating the Past, Present and Future”***. This book was produced by the Historical Society in 2012 to recognize the 125th anniversary of Wilkinsburg’s incorporation as a Borough. This soft-bound book has 196 pages and includes chapters on the history of Wilkinsburg, the celebrations from the past, information about Wilkinsburg’s government, and all the events that occurred during the 125th celebration. There are several chapters about the clubs and organizations in Wilkinsburg as well as the churches and worship centers in the Borough. The “future of Wilkinsburg” section recognizes advertisers and sponsors who helped to fund the creation and printing of the book. This book, originally \$15.00, is now available for \$10.00, plus \$3.00 for shipping.

Make check or money order payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**

Orders can be mailed to: Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O.Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Images of America - Wilkinsburg (\$20.00 + \$3.00) = \$23.00 Quantity_____ Total _____

Century of Learning 1911-2011 (\$15.00 + \$3.00) = \$18.00 Quantity_____ Total _____

Wilkinsburg 1887-2012 (\$10.00 + \$3.00) = \$13.00 Quantity_____ Total _____

Name_____ Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip _____



Don't miss out on **The Wilkinsburg Sun**, a free monthly community newsletter published by the volunteer Wilkinsburg Community Newsletter Board, with the support of the Wilkinsburg Borough, the Wilkinsburg School District, the Wilkinsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Wilkinsburg Community Development Corporation. The Sun accepts submitted articles provided they are related to Wilkinsburg and are civic-minded.
<https://wilkinsburgsun.wordpress.com>

Sign up to receive The Sun by email at:
<http://eepurl.com/v0iBP> and friend The Sun on Facebook.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society has a website, to share more information about the history of Wilkinsburg. wilkinsburghistory.wordpress.com
 Mailing address: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society, P.O. Box 17252, Pittsburgh, PA 15235**

The "Archives" Historical Society newsletter is published monthly, March through November.

We do not usually publish the Archives during the three Winter months of December, January and February.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society yearly dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society are:
 \$20.00 INDIVIDUAL Member, \$35.00 FAMILY Membership
 \$10.00 STUDENT or ASSOCIATE Members Please keep your membership dues up to date.
 Contributions are needed for "Lights for Lincoln", to get improved lighting for the Lincoln Plaza area. Abraham Lincoln stands in the dark after sun-down. Your donation can help us illuminate this outstanding area overlooking the Lincoln Highway.

Wilkinsburg Historical Society - Membership application
Help promote the valuable history of Wilkinsburg.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail address _____

() \$20 Individual membership

() \$35 Family membership

() \$10 Student or associate membership

() \$ Additional donation

Please make check payable to: **Wilkinsburg Historical Society**
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Anytime is a good time to pay your dues for the Wilkinsburg Historical Society. We have many preservation projects going on, and providing displays for Wilkinsburg events. Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your membership dues. Please use the address on the form, our PO box.