



A Report from Focused Conversations on the Preservation Plan for Philadelphia

Prepared for the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia by Heritage Consulting Inc.
October 2008



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The Preservation Plan for Philadelphia

Conducted for

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By



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November 2008

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Introduction

This report on the focused conversations by preservation constituents is one of the first products of the Preservation Plan of Philadelphia undertaken by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.

The Preservation Alliance invited the following stakeholder groups to participate in the focused conversations: architects and engineers, historical societies, historic district residents, community groups, Main Street organizations and commercial corridor organizations, community development corporations, African American historic sites, Design Advocacy Group members, preservation professionals and historic sites and house museums.

Discussion groups were held at the Preservation Alliance offices. Invitation letters were sent and followed by e-mails and phone calls to encourage participation. 143 individuals were invited to participate, and 69 attended discussion group sessions for a response rate of 48%. Ten meetings were held in mid August 2008 and four additional meetings were held in late September 2008. Participants were informed that no comments would be “directly ascribed to them” to promote candid participation. Participants were also informed that their names would be included in a list of attendees in this report.

Questions asked

The script used in these focused conversations was jointly drafted by staff of the Preservation Alliance, contracted professionals, and Heritage Consulting Inc. through a collaborative process. The script guided the conversation but many sessions included new issues of interest to participants which were not in the drafted script. Each focused conversation lasted from one and half to two hours.

The same questions were asked of each group. We invited stakeholders to discuss their current involvement with preservation; the relative strengths and weaknesses of preservation in Philadelphia; any comments on their recent dealings with the Philadelphia Historical Commission; what incentives, policies or funding mechanisms are needed; and finally other people or groups that should be involved in the Preservation Plan. The discussions were led by Donna Ann Harris and had one to fourteen participants. Several Preservation Alliance staff members sat in on some of the conversations to hear comments directly from participants. Heritage Consulting prepared thank you letters to each participant.

At each session, two student interns Alexander Balloon and Laura Keegan took contemporaneous notes. These notes were then evaluated, summarized, and analyzed qualitatively to “make sense” of the large volume of raw notes from these focused conversations. Notes were organized by topic for each individual group. Once all sessions were completed, all raw comments were compiled into strengths, weaknesses, threats and

opportunities format to identify overarching and common themes across all groups. The findings for this report came from this compilation.

How this report is organized

This report is organized in two parts. The first part describes our major findings. The findings are issues and themes that came up repeatedly in the group discussions. The second section of this report contains summaries from the groups we interviewed. Some groups were so large, we divided the participants in half to create a smaller discussion sessions. Each group's concerns are summarized around the main themes or issues that were important to that group. We have included representative, unedited comments by group members to show the range of concerns expressed by participants.

Major findings

The focused conversations yielded many different view points and concerns, but several themes surfaced repeatedly during the conversations. These common themes are noted below.

Change at City Hall

The election of a new mayor was widely discussed in our focused conversations. This new leadership has made urban planning and sustainability a top priority on the city's political agenda. Many participants spoke very enthusiastically about Mayor Nutter and his high quality appointments to various boards and commissions including the Planning and Historical Commissions, the Zoning Board of Adjustment and Office of Arts and Culture. There was great interest in the new Comprehensive Plan being prepared by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission as well as Zoning Code reform by the groups of architects, commercial corridor and community development corporation representatives. Architects and Design Advocacy Group participants mentioned that a closer relationship was needed between the Planning Commission and the Historical Commission, and several individuals suggested that the Historical Commission should be moved into the Planning Commission, if only to access greater resources. Our focused conversations with architects, historical societies and residents of historic districts noted that enforcement by the Department of Licenses and Inspection (L & I) was viewed as lacking and some felt L & I was too quick to permit demolition. Commercial corridor representatives noted there is no city wide inventory of city owned property for land assembly and redevelopment purposes. Several historic district residents and community development corporation representatives felt that City Council members stood in the way of specific preservation projects.

Organizational capacity issues and cooperation among nonprofit organizations

There are a myriad of organizations and individuals working hard to advance the preservation agenda in Philadelphia. These include existing preservation-oriented organizations like the Preservation Alliance or Partners for Sacred Places. There are probably more than fifty different historic sites/museums and historical societies in Philadelphia. Selective community development corporations work with historic resources as do Main Street and commercial corridor organizations.

Virtually all of the historic sites, house museums, African American sites, historical societies and some community development corporations we interviewed are struggling with organizational capacity issues. There were comments made in their discussion groups about the need to better train board members on their fiduciary obligations, involving young people, the difficulty in raising funds and the declining pool of volunteers. These organizations care for some of the most important landmarks in the city, yet they struggle to maintain these sites, and staff them for the public to visit and appreciate.

According to the historic sites/museums, African American sites and many neighborhood groups, tourism is still centered on the historic district at Independence National Historical Park. Many complained there is little, if any, spill over into their sites beyond Center City. There was considerable interest in the context study being conducted for the Preservation Plan, because the broad themes to be developed might create opportunities for joint programming and tour development. Some sites felt that the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation's focus on Black, Hispanic and Gay tourism left out their sites. There was disappointment that the effort to establish a National Heritage Area had fizzled out.

Historic sites/museums continue to be a fractured group, despite attempts in the past by funders to promote cooperation. There are 300 historic sites in the Philadelphia region, but the Tri State Coalition of Historic Places, an organizing entity, was seen as irrelevant. Unlike historic sites, the community development corporations have developed a well regarded service organization, the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC) that serves as a clearinghouse, information and training provider and organizer for their constituents. Perhaps the Tri State Coalition of Historic Places could be reinvigorated along the same lines as the PACDC.

It is unclear from these interviews if there is any real sentiment for historic sites and museums to work together, or to organize to promote their collective agenda. Only one person suggested that the Preservation Alliance provide leadership for this sector.

Funding needs for historic sites and other nonprofit organizations

The vast majority of the historic sites we interviewed have been successful in applying to sophisticated funding sources for capital projects including very competitive state and national grants (such as Save Americas Treasures, Institute of Library and Museum Services and Pennsylvania Keystone Opportunity Grants). Several mentioned gaining appropriations from state elected officials, from city bond funds and from area foundations. Some of the smaller historic sites as well as African American sites do not yet have the capacity to apply to these sources for capital projects, because they are unable to find matching funds, or the application process is difficult for organizations with a small staff.

Virtually all the nonprofit groups we interviewed (community development corporations, historical societies, African American sites, commercial corridor organizations, historic sites and museums) complained about the need for operating funds. There was great interest in the newly reconstituted Office of Arts and Culture, with the hope that this office might supply operating funds. Several historic sites mentioned that capital funds are easier to find, but that there is no specific source of operating funds to pay for staff salaries, interpretation or general maintenance. All but one of the historical societies we spoke with had no or only part time staff. African American sites had similar staffing concerns. Start-up community development corporations face the same challenges, referring to some as "kitchen table CDCs." Finally, there was a call to "grow the pot, not re-divide the slices."

Historic sites noted that foundations wished to support “sexy programs” but not day to day operating costs. Several historic site participants complained that funders still use outdated measures to determine success, such as attendance figures or opening hours. Some felt that grant funders prefer to support new programs rather than current operating and capital projects. One site manager put it succinctly “[We] can fund a lot of projects, but don’t have the staff to manage the projects.”

All of these nonprofit groups raise their entire operating budget each year from a whole host of sources including membership, special events, sponsorships and board gifts. No one mentioned starting or growing an endowment, despite the fact we are now in the midst of an extraordinary transfer of wealth between generations. If any of these organizations are to be truly sustainable, they must be trained to solicit planned gifts and start endowment campaigns

There were serious concerns among the community development corporations and commercial corridor organization about the type of funding available for rehabilitation. These groups explained that many funding programs work against preservation “[There is] no money for stabilization of neighborhood buildings, demolition [money] is the only money available.” “In areas like ours, we’d like to preserve, but there’s no funding to back that policy.” Several participants stated that the funding that is available had too many restrictions and that flexibility is needed to meet rehabilitation needs in the neighborhoods.

Incentives to encourage rehabilitation and disincentives to prevent demolition

All but one of the groups suggested that new incentives, policies or funding mechanisms were needed to spur additional rehabilitation activity. Participants suggested a wide variety of options such as:

- state or city property tax incentives or abatements
- state grants for rehabilitation
- grants from real estate transfer tax
- state income tax incentives
- tax increment financing
- transfer of development rights, and
- City business tax abatements or fee reductions to encourage more and better quality rehabilitation both for commercial and residential owners.

Most groups mentioned that incentives for homeowners were critical especially if they could be created to encourage better maintenance of historic properties. Some historic site representatives and preservation professionals spoke up for state incentives for commercial

property owners citing successful state tax incentive programs in Maryland and North Carolina as examples. Several Design Advocacy Group representatives and preservation professionals noted that new construction abatements should be abolished in favor of preservation only abatements.

Commercial corridors and community development corporations offered the most strident call for disincentives to prevent demolition. They sought zoning incentives for rehabilitation rather than disincentives. Several commercial corridor representatives suggested options to lessen the Business Privilege Tax and L & I fees or rebates as being worthy of consideration.

Despite the widespread call for incentives and disincentives, there was no consensus on what avenues to try. There also seemed to be very little real understanding of the many options available and/or the time/effort needed to implement any of these incentives either citywide or statewide. This topic merits more discussion with the preservation community.

Concerns about the regulatory process

Virtually every group we interviewed said that the Philadelphia Historical Commission was woefully understaffed and overburdened with their existing duties, due to their small budget. Several residents of historic districts said that their dealings with the Commission have always been positive and cited specific staff members as being especially helpful. Few participants in the focused conversations were aware that the city does not have a comprehensive historic sites survey to identify individual buildings or neighborhoods worth preserving.

Many, but not all, discussion groups cited specific problems in their dealings with the Philadelphia Historical Commission. They felt that decisions were arbitrary. Windows were a particular problem, as well as enforcement of existing regulations. Participants asked if there was a way to simplify the complex regulatory process of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The ideas that surfaced included giving applicants a pre-approved list of replacement windows or exterior lighting. Architects asked for locally developed bulletins, briefing sheets, or lists of approved vendors to speed approval processes, especially for replacement windows. Some groups wished to explore Conservation Districts because they feel the regulations of the Historical Commission are too onerous. There were repeated calls for city designated properties to be identified on deeds, through the Bureau of Revision of Taxes web site or the Philadelphia Historical Commission's web site.

Overcoming the poor perception of preservation in Philadelphia

The majority of the groups we interviewed spent a great deal of time discussing the poor image that historic preservation has in this city. Some participants commented specifically about Philadelphia Historical Commission requirements and its bureaucracy as the cause of these image problems. Some perceptions may not be able to be rectified as they require wholesale changes in regulations at Philadelphia Historical Commission such as how the Commission

interprets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. We believe that some perception issues could be surmounted by providing direct assistance to homeowners at the neighborhood level.

The recent educational effort made by the Preservation Alliance to make historic district residents aware of the approval process at the Historical Commission is an excellent start to help make existing historic district regulations more "user friendly to individual homeowners." However, this effort must be reinvigorated to overcome the wide spread perception by our discussion group participants that approvals at the Philadelphia Historical Commission take too long and are costly to homeowners.

Many participants felt that more basic preservation education is needed, especially at the neighborhood level. Far beyond a public relations effort to change the perception of preservation, there is a need for genuine education of homeowners and organizations about the ways and benefits of maintaining historic properties.

Many applauded the Preservation Alliance's Historic Properties Repair Program, homeowner workshops, and Old House Fair as being effective educational tools. These Alliance programs are bringing a positive message about preservation into communities that are not now locally designated historic districts. The recently produced Row House Manual was viewed by many as a very successful educational tool for preservation because it provided general maintenance advice. Others see the Manual as a method to bring more people into the preservation family or at least interest them in maintenance issues.

There were few specific ideas about how to overcome the image problem that plagues preservation. Most of the image problems are not new, and may represent old attitudes. This is an important matter to address as part of the larger scope of the Preservation Plan for Philadelphia.

Focus Group Summaries

This section of the report is organized by the groups we interviewed for the focused conversations and gives a summary of the major themes discussed with each group.

A list of the participants in the focused conversations follows this section.

The bulleted lists under each topic heading are actual comments made by participants.

HISTORIC SITES AND HOUSE MUSEUMS

August 12 and August 14, 2008

Significant Organizational Capacity Needs--Historic sites explained they have significant capital improvement and operating fund needs. Many of the larger or more sophisticated sites were successful in accessing some of the most popular state and national funding sources (such as Save Americas Treasures, Institute of Library and Museum Services and PA Keystone Opportunity Grants). Increased visitation is a goal. New volunteers are needed to staff historic sites.

- Organizational development and capacity building are needs. Increasing visitation is the biggest challenge to us.
- Aging volunteers. Biggest liabilities are working on an old paradigm with volunteer tour guides.
- A board that isn't dynamic, [there are] succession issues for long time leaders with historic sites. Board training [is needed] on fiduciary obligations, [most are] clueless and don't know what they are doing.
- Getting people excited about volunteering is important because they are crucial to our sites. Our current volunteer corps is aging.
- A quick burnout rate for executive directors. Business grads don't want low-paying historic sites jobs.
- National trend to close house museums, and I think it's a wave and we need to ride the wave out. They're looking at closing some of the sites, we hear rumors.
- They are deeply held ideas [how house museums should be run]. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association model from 1852 hasn't changed a bit.

Funding Needs and Grant Disconnect--Grant funders also prefer to fund new programs rather than current operating and capital projects. Many grant funders still use outdated measures to determine success, the same measures used since the 1960s.

- [We] need both capital and operating funding. Capital money is easy to get, operating funds are very difficult to get. [We] can fund a lot of projects, but don't have the staff to manage the projects. Funding for interpretation is needed
- Some funding requirements include a hurdle too steep for small places to compete.
- Philadelphia is so rich in historic sites, but all the foundations want [is] to fund programs and events. No one wants to fund sites. Preservation, bricks and mortar no one wants to fund that. They want to fund sexy programs.
- Funders that use visitation or number of days open as a yardstick for organizational health. Same grant disconnect between funders and operators. Some foundations have stopped giving operating funding.
- Public/Private partnership that creates a larger capital fund. We want to all become friends, in order to get the money we have to differentiate ourselves.

Expanding the Focus beyond the Historic District--Participants wanted to tap into the traditional tourist market which visits the Independence National Historical Park. They stressed the popularity of thematic and cultural tourism which can network a greater breadth of historic sites.

- Heritage Tourism is on the downslide. There is a new emphasis on tourism, but historic sites are bypassed. The move to tourism is a major economic engine for Philadelphia.
- Too much emphasis lays on colonial heritage. INHP sucks all the air from other tourism destinations in the city.
- Germantown- They tried all sorts of thematic things and none of them worked. Now they're turning to the local community. They are trying to get more tourists to Northwest Philadelphia.
- Marketing becomes too reductive [only certain ethnic groups]. What happens if your museum does not fit in the theme?
- Sites linked by themes which were inclusive and could be worked together is a [good idea].
- Increasing visitation is the biggest challenge.

Lack of Marketing and Visibility--Participants cited a lack of knowledge about historic sites in the local population. This included a lack of marketing of sites to both tourists and residents.

- 30th Street Station doesn't have visitor information for historic and heritage sites. There is little visibility at Airport Gateways. It's important for visitor centers to drive tourists to different sites than just INHP. Why do INHP and Fairmount Park have separate visitor centers?

- Marketing and education to Philadelphia visitors and residents [should be better addressed].
- GPTMC is focused on Black/Hispanic/Gay tourism. There is a lack of interest in historic sites in general. The Tourism Marketing Corporation never comes to historic sites (they function totally as their own intervention). They don't approach sites.
- Visitation and neighborhood involvement. Half the people across the [board] don't even know we're here. Visitors from out of town don't know how to get there.

Fragmented Community--Participants addressed the lack of a cohesive plan for heritage and historic sites in Philadelphia. There are no incentives to work together.

- The 14 sites combine to a 2 ½ million dollar budget (Germantown sites). The economic impact of all these treasures.
- Too many organizations exist, resulting in a lack of coordination in Germantown. There is a fragmented constituency. One voice is needed.
- Tri State Coalition for Historic Sites is not strong or is irrelevant. Historic sites have no organizing group.
- [Great] concentration of historic house museums.
- Collaboration among sites is needed.
- The house museums [have a] territorial feeling. People aren't trying to move "us" forward. No one has really figured out a way to get people to work together.
- Philadelphia lacks leadership in key areas to move the city forward. Germantown has 11 CDCs and 14 sites. 300 house museums [have] no central group.

Incentives-There were many ideas about incentives

- Homeowner tax incentives
- Tax credits for developers for re-use of buildings and for development in blighted areas, and [incentives for] residential purposes.
- North Carolina, Savannah [revolving funds] non-profits sell properties to private individuals who take care of the properties.
- Recent bond issue for 5 cultural districts and capital projects for arts and cultural organizations, 19 historic sites that got funded.
- Low-interest loans available for renovation.

- Partners for Sacred Places funding programs use an asset-based community attitude...link social programs ...How are you serving the community around you?

Philadelphia Historical Commission

- They need more help. Jon needs more staff, and we found them very responsive. They have too much to cover. More help for Conservation District program.

MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

August 12, 2008

Skewed Incentives and Funding Programs--Participants explained that many funding programs work against preservation. They also discussed adding new incentives for preservation like Business Privilege Tax abatement and Licenses and Inspections fee waivers.

- Financial incentives for property owners (residential) such as ten year tax abatements.
- Create disincentives when buildings are going to be used merely as bill board or cell tower locations with nothing else in them.
- Offer incentives to lessen the Business Privilege Tax and L & I fees or rebates.
- Even some 50/50 matching funds are too hard to work with.
- Land-valued tax versus the "tax on improvements system" discourages improvements.
- Demolition [money] is the only money available. [There is] no money for stabilization of neighborhood buildings.
- We think of tax-credits and incentives at the COMCAST level, not for small business-owners, homeowners, etc. I'd love to get something off the end of my tax bill, but I'm not COMCAST.
- We need more flexible money that allows us to use funds for projects we deem most important rather than what the funder will pay for.
- The cost of preservation. Costs were double what it would be for a brownstone. It's very difficult to use the standards. We learned from that. We needed huge subsidies. In areas like ours, we'd like to preserve, but there's no funding to back that policy.

Fractured Ownership--Participants explained that the challenge of acquiring land for redevelopment is slow and costly.

- Ownership of property when people have died; there is no clear title to get the property and you can't renovate it if the city doesn't own it.

- Speed tax delinquency to get the property into the hands of developers. Property is moving through the system slowly, [we need to speed it] moving back to the market. The paperwork is drawn out and costly. Timing is holding up the contractors and the money. When people consider historic preservation it takes too long. ... Speed up the permit process.

A Wealth of Resources--Participants in this group explained that Philadelphia has an incredible collection of historic sites and physical fabric. Participants talked about the poor physical condition of many of the historic resources within the city.

- Volume- there's so much here.
- Colonial is privileged over the other properties.
- Lots of them, and what difference does it make if we lose some. There's so much of it, what difference does it make if we take [a] church down?

A Decentralized and Disparate Community--Commercial properties are often small, held by single individuals. Micro-enterprise was seen as an effective approach for preservation-minded businesses due to the smaller scale of business. Participants mentioned the high cost in both time and resources in working with individual business-owners on storefront-improvement grants, etc.

- 15-17 feet wide is the standard, some stores need a larger footprint. Upstairs living space is [good but there] are some code issues, life-safety codes.
- Owners who push demo by neglect. They let it rot until it gets condemned by L & I then it is torn down. NTI knocked out a tooth of a whole row.
- How do you take older buildings on commercial corridors? Getting someone to use the storefront or save the windows, etc. That's the challenge and it's expensive.
- It's expensive. There has been more destruction than preservation. The neighborhood's becoming more sensitive about it. [There is a] development/preservation tradeoff.

A Need to Prioritize Corridor Development--Participants mentioned that the city's commercial corridors have shrunk over time. Participants discussed the need to prioritize investment in the corridors with the most promise, rather than investing in areas that are not expected to be revitalized.

- Do you shrink the corridors? It's already starting to happen. [Some feel] Oh no, we can't preference. [There is] commercial push and pull, but not in my neighborhood. [It them becomes a] political question.

- Overlays are good to prevent bad, [but] delays can kill an entire project. City council can hurt the process.
- E-CONSULT Report for LISC will be important [to identify viable corridors.]

Other Issues There are not enough “preservation contractors.” A Commercial Storefront Manual similar to the Row House Manual is needed.

- Need for groups of skilled contractors able to work on rehab projects. Preservation contractor’s license. Where do you get a contractor to do a block face?
- A row house manual for commercial architecture of Philadelphia [is needed].
- How do you evaluate if the store is worth investing in? What’s behind it? [Are we] propping up failing businesses? Old people who aren’t savvy and holding on for dear life. If the business is failing, it doesn’t make sense to invest the money.
- Business owners look at it [rehabilitation] as a cost and not an investment, because the business is failing.

Philadelphia Historical Commission

- They need a reality check. There’s no integration, it’s a lot of silos.
- When people consider historic preservation it takes too long. It’s expensive.
- Standards of significance. They wanted all the windows replaced with the same windows. They were unrealistic. There’s got to be some middle road or you just get night-removals and stuff.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES

August 13, 2008

A Rich History--Philadelphia has a rich history of prominent African-Americans along with the stories and events to enliven this history.

- We have the scholarship to back that up. We have several themes to illustrate. We can talk about the historic district and the African-American presence there. We have the President’s House; we have the archeology there that confirms the story.
- We finally opened the Underground Railroad museum [at Belmont Mansion].
- The evidence of enslaved Africans at Washington’s White House. It lets you know the historic districts had a lot of Africans both free and enslaved.

- There are many African Americans who see themselves as part of the post-civil rights movement. ... There's an overarching theme that Philadelphia has always been at the forefront of the Freedom Movement/Civil Rights, and as we look back to the history of Mother Bethel Church, with all of those early activities, then you [can] go forward. Our rich history even looks to the civic [organizations like] Jack and Jill, The Links, social and civic organizations. We can't ignore W. E. DuBois and *The Philadelphia Negro*. ... The role of radio and the icons of radio, and how that was scored in Philadelphia. ... The DJs saw themselves as community leaders.

Significant Organizational and Funding Needs--Participants discussed the significant organizational and developmental challenges in the community: leadership, volunteerism, fundraising, and measuring success. Funding was mentioned as a significant problem, including the lack of predictability for funding.

- As we look at the historic houses and those organizations that are centered around built resources, to look at organizational development challenges: leadership, volunteerism, raising money, and success issues. Those are issues that really dog our African American community and our ability to move forward. Building strong organizations that can support those assets, through stint of will and just plain stubbornness. It's very difficult. The organizational development issues are there, fundraising issues are there, [as well as] promotional issues.
- Gary Steuer came out of the New York State Arts Council [now housed] at Mayor's Office. The right people are in place, he's got to find some money, and we have to help him.
- This issue of a stream of funding for cultural issues. New York State single-stream funding [is a good model.] It's pitiful that the stream of funding through competitive grant process doesn't work [here].
- Grow the pot, rather than re-divide the slices. I think we have to be careful [to] not send that signal of divisiveness.
- Cultural Fund is a little token, and there's a huge [funding] gap, and then where do you go? Arts and Culture Office was disbanded [by Street Administration.]

Lack of Marketing and Visibility--Participants talked about the challenge to inform and broaden the visibility of the African American historical experience. This includes both marketing sites, and improving the visibility of sites to not only tourists, but local residents as well.

- Success has come from resources which make a national connection rather than the local. [There is] an infusion of funds from federal sources because they have been able to tap into national stories.

- They too were saying that we want to promote this asset. How do we do that and ensure that the story promotes African-American tourism? Come see this and it looks like a dump. They're struggling, the building is crumbling, and they're still seeking the resources.
- Visibility is a challenge. We need people to know. More than a brochure.
- Philadelphia doesn't need another promotion vehicle, [we can] build on what we have and make it more effective, incorporate with existing organizations. Many people are interested, but helping people be better coordinate the existing promotional efforts.

Fragmented Voices and Groups--Participants mentioned the challenge of speaking together to inform policymakers and agenda-setters.

- Why can't we bring folks together and collectively [say] we're going to get this done. GPTMC and the Preservation Alliance should work on this part, organizational capacity. The Preservation Alliance doesn't do marketing/PR but we still have to have it done. Collaboration with some peers.

Philadelphia Historical Commission

- For the Royal Theater, we had dealings with the historical commission, it hasn't been bad.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

August 14, 2008

Organizational Challenges--Many activities related to historic preservation are complex and require a lot of time and technical expertise.

- Public thinks we're a "social club" because we have to devote so much time and effort to fundraising.
- Our goal is [to have] a full time executive director, [so we can be] more accessible, and [do] more outreach.
- Society was instrumental in getting the [National Register] historic district. They hired a bunch of people to survey 2600 buildings in Chestnut Hill. ... huge binders that detail the history of these 2600 buildings, individual homes and shops

Small Budgets-- Some organizations are having difficulty raising funds to continue operations. The constant need to fundraise is seen at times, detracting for the core mission of the organization.

- We fundraise to death. Ghost tour, appraisal fair. ... We get membership that way. Operating costs are tough. ...New people [are] unconnected. No endowment. [We have a] \$270,000 dollar budget.

- We're running on a \$75,000 dollars [budget] and it's hard, we scramble. Grant writing is tough. Brick and mortar money is tough to get.
- Grants have never been a big component of our operation. Granting organizations are changing. They're becoming more demanding, [they want] very specific plans, and a relationship over a long period of time. [We] need money for the operating budget. They want to give you money for new activities, but not existing ones.

Difficulty Finding Volunteers--Many organizations are having trouble finding new volunteers. Many of the current volunteer corps is aging. They also want to get young people more involved in the process.

- To be on the board of the historical society was the biggest prestige. What's changed? Demographically it's radically different. You had to be elected as a member, it was a prestigious position. Old Chestnut Hill families aren't involved, the board is mostly newcomers.
- I think you have to start with young people to be interested. I haven't met many young people interested in architecture now.
- Volunteerism is low- it's hard. I need young people.
- [We have] 10-15 [people that] are contributing, without them we literally wouldn't exist. They are passionate people.

Changing Neighborhoods--Some historical societies are in neighborhoods that are radically different than their earlier history. Because of this there is difficulty connecting current residents with the history of their neighborhood. Some organizations are struggling with what is acceptable infill development in historic neighborhoods.

- It's a very well established settled highly-residential [neighborhood]. [We are] trying to sell people on preservation. It's increasingly a transitory society.
- Frankford is a mix of Colonial-Victorian. The board of directors consists of non-profits charitable organizations. Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) money went to tear things down, and then infill. They are more concentrated on infills of low-income housing.
- Stop building new houses, and pay more attention to older structures. We just had a mill torn down through eminent domain to make way for new housing. We have to pay attention to the housing stock that we have, instead of tearing down and building new.
- Complaints to L & I are handled differently now. You have to give your information. Then you're given this number. With L & I you don't know where the information is going. You have to go online to file complaint, it is not anonymous anymore.

Fragmented Voices and Groups--There aren't relationships between historical societies. This prevents a common use of best practices and exchange of ideas.

- Opportunity [to] start organizing differently. No relationships between our respective historical societies. We can help each other in ways.
- Real strength in numbers. Grant funders like the partnerships.
- But I do feel sad that there aren't more people interested. It didn't use to be like this. We put all of our stuff in this room in the library. People interested in the history of the mills, not as many people like that today.

Incentives

- Ten-year moratorium on taxes for new construction.
- Need for operating support bricks and mortar.

Philadelphia Historical Commission

- The historical commission is severely understaffed and unable to provide significant resources to assist local organizations in local issues like design review, zoning, etc.
- It's very hard and hard getting things on registers.
- Historical commission is very weak. They are a couple of buildings on the register, they are terribly under funded. No one expects they will be able to help you. Quality of staff, they are overwhelmed, [and have a] bunker mentality.

ARCHITECTS
August, 19 2008

Problems of Image and Perception--Participants discussed that preservation is seen as an additional burden or cost to property owners. Participants expressed the need to show the economic effects of preservation.

- Conveying relevance of preservation to low and moderate income people. [Show] options available to them, [its] a huge issue. Low-income people think it's [preservation] expensive.
- Preservation is tedious and expensive. [There is a] perception challenge. Historic preservation is seen as very restrictive with regulations of what you can and cannot do, and the cost for rehab is high.
- Economics is a driving force; need to put a dollar sign to it [cost of demolition].

- The preservation community blocking really excellent projects that are in the best interest of the city. It's our greatest strength and our greatest weakness.
- Preservation is seen as a tool for neighborhood sustainability and development.

The Technical Challenges of Re-use--Many architects mentioned the current challenges to re-use buildings. This includes the technical challenges of state-of-the art building systems.

- Adaptive re-use ... require[s] a lot of mechanical and electrical. New code requirements have a major impact on the historic fabric. A lot of engineers don't respect the historic fabric.
- I must say that recently architects with no background are getting into the field, but they do no research about the original building.
- I think [one of our] assets [are the] educational institutions, also opportunities. Many have architecture or engineering schools that are more aware of archaic materials and old building systems.
- The challenges of integrating the Secretary of Interior's Standards with issues of sustainability and LEED standards.

Preservation Education Needed--Participants mentioned that preservation is common sense. Participants mentioned the Philadelphia Row House Manual as a good example of a preservation educational tool.

- Economic studies are needed. [We need] some kind of portfolio to show the positive impact of historic preservation. I think the most important thing is "the row house." 50% of the buildings are row houses, [show] the value of the row house, [its] one of the most economical ways of living ever designed.
- Row house handbook could apply to a zillion neighborhoods. Simplify some of the details, and you won't be able to overlay the city, it's too prescriptive. It's got to be seen as something to preserve neighborhoods.
- They take tremendous pride in their neighborhoods. In every neighborhood, but there are important buildings, iconic buildings, in neighborhoods even if they are not designated are a source of pride for the community around them.
- [We deal with] opposition on the City Council. [To] enlighten communities are easy, but broadly speaking regular community folks need to get their City Council person on board.

Incentives—There are not enough incentives to promote preservation.

- There are no resources to do what needs to be done.

- Chicago Bungalow initiative [allows] people who participate in the program [to] get quicker permit review.
- Zoning incentives rather than disincentives. Encourage incentives for maintenance or credits.
- Look at other cities that give fines for people who demolish by neglect.
- Real estate transfer tax, grants for homeowners.

Philadelphia Historical Commission--Participants asked if there was a way to simplify the complex regulatory process of the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

- Why is it necessary to go to the Commission on window issues? Why can't staff just sign off? Replacement windows that are "appropriate" seems arduous to a homeowner.
- Old buildings are treated as if they are all of equal importance. No Class 1- Class 2. Recognize that [some] buildings [deserve] greater protection.
- Commission members (i.e. volunteers) do not consistently attend meetings. We have had cases where we have items that must be reviewed next month and we get different commissioners who attend these meetings and we have to start all over to explain our project. Frustrating.
- Absolutely notify people they own a historic building. Making people aware of whether their building is historic, [should be able to] check online.
- I think a big threat is increasing the staff if they're doing the same thing. We're not looking at how to use people in this computer age.
- The issue I see that most of the designation is haphazard, no planning, it's just so and so has a nice house and then they decide to get on the register. No comprehensive view.
- We spent six years trying to get the Spruce Hill designated; the community spent so much money. Bringing districts on board is impossible.
- Enforcement is a challenge. Often people just do what they want to do regardless. No real teeth to the decisions that the Historical Commission makes.
- I feel like there is a secret list of vendors that the PHC will approve but I don't know about it.

COMMUNITY GROUPS/CDCs
August 20, 2008 and August 21, 2008

Problem of Image/Perception--Connections to low and moderate income residents could be strengthened. Participants said people see preservation as a cost. They get scared about permits and regulations by the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

- [I] recommended a preservation district but neighbors didn't latch on to it. Preservation is seen as an instrument to achieve another goal, to achieve increased property value. We don't have increased property values mindset [here because it] undercuts the community development context.
- Infill housing that does not reflect the community pattern; we want new housing to fit in.
- Preservation is viewed as a way to increase property values; that is not an interest in our neighborhood.
- People are not maintaining their homes (in West Philadelphia); they are waiting for Penn or a developer to buy them out for campus expansion.
- Help homeowners in making their decisions. [We need a] list of contractors who understand historic buildings. [Some homeowners] hired contractors who took their money and they still have L & I violations.
- Perception challenge: a lot of people see historic preservation as very restrictive. More regulation what they can and cannot do. [We need to tap into] nostalgia and fond memory of the way the neighborhoods used to be.
- Clear up the misunderstanding with low and moderate income homeowners that preservation is expensive.

The Technical Challenges of Re-use—There are vacant properties in Philadelphia neighborhoods. Participants explained the difficulties of finding a better use for an old property.

- Until we had the NCD, the building code and zoning code only restricted height and use, but our neighborhood is mostly 3-story zoning. We want people to have brick or stone fronts; we were concerned with very small, narrow streets. Streets less than 20 feet wide, adjacent to 2 stories. [We need to] respect the cornice line. ... We're trying to keep our character without dictating what style people should build.
- People are sitting on properties, they're eyesores.

- Better quality building in Philadelphia. [We need a] design review board. As an architect I'm conflicted. I don't want people telling me what the design should look like, but you can have the proper review board, that doesn't dictate style, but pushes a developer [to use]... better quality materials, and be more sympathetic to the context of the neighboring community.

Preservation Education Needed-- Many community organizations don't know what preservation is. It's not even on their agenda.

- I think home repair in general [is important]. If you have home repair you can have a much larger agenda. Home repair is a huge need across the entire city, not unique to the preservation committee. [With the] PHL loan the city has now, [you] have to get 3 bids, for a home improvement project, have to be a public bidding process.
- Row house is a nice entry way to talk to homeowners about maintenance and preservation. Maintenance is preservation ethic.
- Preservation is not an agenda item for the neighborhoods.
- We have a wide range of housing stock, from small twins and row houses up to mansions. Intentional racial integration, [current] housing stock [lacks] "one floor places" for aging population.
- People don't connect sense of nostalgia to historic district. Historic preservation as a tool to influence the way the neighborhood looks in the future.

Organizational Capacity-- Many organizations don't have the capacity to take on additional activities. Many of these organizations are "kitchen table" CDCs with minimal or no staff. High staff turnover makes educational programming difficult.

- Capacity of small organizations (CDCs) in general to take on larger projects [is a problem].
- Small CDCs with no or tiny staffs, living hand to mouth, "kitchen-table CDCs."
- Need to invest in training staff, because of turnover. Training has to be on-going.

Incentives

- All kinds of dollars are needed, loans, grants, tax deductions, credits abatements etc.
- Maintenance incentives.
- Financial incentives to property owners and developers retain the properties, for homeowners and commercial.
- Demolition by neglect disincentives.

Philadelphia Historical Commission--Participants mentioned problems with the Philadelphia Historical Commission, and the lack of consistent application of standards.

- Commission staff is too small. Always positive experience. Jonathan answered all of our questions, met with us and consultants.
- We bought a house in Society Hill built in 1968 which predated designation of Society Hill. The Architectural Review Committee had a difficult time with [our plans]. In the end they said we couldn't do what we wanted. Very little guidelines, [we are] non-historic in a historic district. ... [We] came up with a compromise.
- Frustration [there are] no clear guidelines. Architectural Review Committee has no clear guidelines, but use Dept. of Interior Standards.
- The Queen Village Association thought about making it a historic district, there are a number of houses on the [city] register. A number of people had difficulty getting approval, [so we decided it was] not in [our] best interest to become historic district. [We enacted a] Conservation District this June. We wrote our own design guidelines. We think that's going to be better for us than a historic district, we have more specific control.
- Anything to streamline the process for relatively simple changes or repairs. [There is no] "simple" process for minor repairs.
- [Address of each designated property] needs to be connected to philly.gov and the Board of Revision of Taxes. The BRT, it doesn't tell you whether a home is historic or not. It's not anywhere. When a building is in a historic district, [it should be] added to deeds.
- Residents are scared stiff to go before the Commission.
- People who come with the architects with the drawings, [get] more approval, than people with a handwritten drawing. [The Commission does] not [have] the resources to help. [Can there be] some pool or way to make [architects] readily available, to help with the educational process as well. Only the people who are well-off can pay for attorneys and architects to join them.

RESIDENTS OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS
August 19, 2008 and August 21, 2008

Make Preservation Easy--The easier preservation is, the less concerned people will be.

- Getting help from people who are supposed to help us [is difficult].

- CCRA Board has mixed emotions about preservation. Some see preservation running counter to development interests. Rittenhouse-Fitler Square historic district is a local historic district. CCRA had little dealings with that.
- Fear that preservation costs too much.
- Making preservation a more friendly process.
- Describe the value of a row home, since 50% of our housing stock in the city is row homes.
- Our current major issue is property use in Overbrook Farms. We want to convert properties back to original use (homes). There is a small commercial district at 63rd street between City Line and. Designated a National Register Historic District.

Regulatory Reform--City agencies and their processes are a concern for homeowners.

- Bureaucracy is a hard sell, [people are] scared stiff of historical commission. They heard about L&I, ZBA, think it's going to be another batch of bureaucracy. [PHC should] become a friendlier agency.
- Chasing people down on preservation issues isn't the way to do it. Has to be meaningful, rational. Marketplace has to want that product. Customer that's clamoring for it.

Incentives

- There should be [an incentive] for preserving historic fabric, especially maintenance.
- 10 year tax abatement

Philadelphia Historical Commission Some residents in historic districts felt that they were "on their own" when taking on a controversial project.

- Government has been mute while the community struggled with a redevelopment project. The neighborhood was abandoned to deal with the developer. The neighborhood couldn't come to grips with the complications of neighborhood development, enhancement, and preservation. I fault the government for not providing more help in evaluating the decisions. They let us go, until we self-destructed.
- Perceive them [PHC] as roadblocks. They need an advocate that will sell them, advocate for needed staffing.
- Our experience has always been positive. Jonathan came to community to answer questions. Jonathan met with us and our consultants to finalize our nominations.
- They need money for staff. That's really the issue. The staffing level is a big crime.

- Expensive, tedious
- They have been marvelous in helping us with the historic district. They went for some grant money. People who had bad experiences wrote us a letter asking if we could prove. [The PHC] answered every question, put it in writing.

PRESERVATION PROFESSIONALS
September 25, 2008 and September 30, 2008

Preservation formally and informally--We need to appreciate the wealth of the resources we already have, and infuse preservation as a philosophy.

- Historic districts are community Preservation with a capital P. Planning Commission to infuse as much of preservation with a lower case p.
- A strong misunderstanding of preservation, [it is seen] as a barrier rather than an asset.
- A lot of citizens feel that preservationists are elitists, top-down driven and there to tell people to spend a lot of money they don't have.
- People in general like preservation, they like buildings, they don't have to participate [when] it doesn't touch them. People like preservation as long as they don't have to do it.
- The new zoning code is a key opportunity. People identify with their neighborhoods, needs to strengthen those neighborhoods, and a vehicle to be appreciated and active in preservation, in their own self-interest, and align our interest with community character.
- Mayoral administration that is open to preservation, open to sustainability, tie the two together and that makes our argument that much stronger. Invest in plans and ideas that would come out of that.

Federal Preservation Program Administered by the SHPO--This program is very effective. Selling Historic Tax Credits can raise equity for a project, and help to finance adaptive use and historic preservation. The State Historic Preservation Office could be more supportive in nominating more buildings to the National Register.

- The State Review Board has scaled back now, only meeting 3 times per year, [you must submit materials] 6-7 months ahead of time.
- There is economic development loss if we cannot get buildings on the National Register. [This is a] very negative effect on preservation projects on this city, and has economic development consequences. State/City losing tremendous opportunities as a result.
- We sell tax credits to syndicators.

Incentives--Participants talked about tax incentives including abatements.

- Transfer Development Rights. So badly written [in current zoning code], no one can use it.
- Historic homeownership tax credit grant program at state, way to increase the economic resources of homeowners.
- The use of tax incentives. Abatements and incentives. Historic tax credits and federal policies.
- State tax credits in other states are having a tremendous effect. Maryland residential and commercial tax credits are working.
- A state tax credit.
- Get rid of the new construction abatements.
- More creative approach of how to make [abandoned] buildings viable. In the 70s-80s Baltimore promoted dollar houses, renovated and re-occupied, done appropriately, meet certain standards.
- State credits, abatements, alternatives for abandoned housing.

Philadelphia Historical Commission--There needs to be a consistent application of standards. Many people see preservation as a burden rather than as a resource. PHC is seen as a reactive organization instead of a proactive organization.

- It can be onerous, the historical commission. It's [rulings are] inconsistent, overbearing. What is preservation? Family-friendly preservation, better to get people interested, broaden our standards.
- Part of the problem is that it's a stand-alone agency; it belongs in City Planning as a whole.
- The Philadelphia Historical Commission is a victim of its own success. They have 3200 additional properties to administer.
- It's not just getting people 5 shop drawings to get one molding profile. The Commission staff, in several cases, added value to our project.
- Review to be thoughtful at some levels, but painful attention to detail.
- Coordination between city districts and National Register districts. Need an updated inventory of all districts, city and National Register districts.
- Historical Commission [should be] more proactive instead as reactive; make them more a positive force before things are threatened or about to happen.

- I always think the historical commission should be stricter.

DESIGN ADVOCACY GROUP
September 25, 2008 and September 30, 2008

Wealth of Historic Resources--Philadelphia has a wealth of great streets and buildings. A lot of those buildings are iconic.

- Germantown is an architectural Disneyland [in a good way].
- The stock of historic buildings. Historic buildings, sense of place/character, whole range of health/vitality.
- Authenticity, very basic.
- The buildings are very important-part of the street. Preservation movement and economic development. "Great Streets" vs. "Iconic Historic Buildings."
- We have this irreplaceable bank of housing, well-built, good craftsmanship/materials, [its] invaluable.

Regulatory Reform--The current system of building permits, codes, L & I, and the Historical Commission is complex, inefficient, and expensive. Applicants have to pay a large amount of money to "expedite permits." Applicants are also bounced around between zoning, historical commission, building departments. Participants talked about the possibility of a "moratorium on demolition."

- Why are all these organizations separate: preservation, planning, building codes? What order [do] you go to these people?
- [If I] want that [PHC] approval, [I have to get it] before I get my building permit. I'm not sure what my building permit is doing if I have to go up to Streets Department for them to stamp. Not the plans inspector job. Expedited review, unless you pay, no one is going to work on [your project] for months. Otherwise there is a 2 week review for expedited. If you don't pay the high fees, its 6 weeks to five months wait. How do I explain that to a homeowner? I need 6 checks. I actually like the reviews; they're the right thing to do. Neighborhood reviews, no one cares except the people who live there.
- Old houses have so many issues that you have to deal with as a homeowner. I'm struggling to do this and I have a decent salary, how do others do that?
- L & I staff is too eager to tear down buildings.
- Councilmanic privilege is a big problem.

- [We should have a] moratorium on demolition until we have a plan.
- Marginalization of historic preservation.

Incentives

- Community Preservation Act. Municipalities could choose to add an assessment to property tax that would go towards community preservation open space, historic preservation.
- Neighborhood TIFs. Physical improvement TIFs.
- Incentives. Development bonuses, transferable development rights
- 10 year tax abatements.
- How is preservation measured?
- Parking disincentives.

Philadelphia Historical Commission There must be reform at the Historical Commission. The preservation movement as a whole is being hurt by the attention to mundane things like mullions on windows.

- Preservation movement [is] being hurt [by] taking on insignificant buildings. Broad amount of time, talking about mundane things like the windows.
- Kind of window that the historical commission will accept is a 6 x 6 double hung. Every time you have to fight the battle. Wasted time and resources, policies at the staff level. Authentic divided light, or synthetic divided light windows. Visually you can't tell the difference.
- [PHC is] jammed on review, everything else suffers, [need] better systems. Staff is positive, but beleaguered. They seem like they're out on their own.
- Arbitrary, nostalgic and sentimental.
- No city-wide survey.
- The historical commission is really problematic-it's a matter of priorities. [They] don't see the big picture; they'll worry about the mullions. They got hysterical over energy-efficient windows that were compatible.
- [PHC staff says] I don't care about your building code problems; I'll make you go back and forth.

- Give them more money and more staff. When you talk to a person they want to help. They do an amazing amount of work with no resources and staff. [They] care [more] for the building over the user.
- The individual homeowner, they would have to go through the hoops like nobody's business.
- The few times I've been through the historical commission, sometimes they help you make the right decisions, when the client doesn't want to.
- Remarket preservation as culture.....Historic preservation [has] negative connotations.

List of Participants in Focused Conversations

African American Interests

Ramona Riscoe Benson, African American Museum of Philadelphia
Patricia Wilson-Aden, Rhythm and Blues Foundation
Blanche Burton-Lyles, Marian Anderson Historic Site
Audrey Johnson-Thornton, Belmont Mansion & Underground Railroad Museum
Viki Sand, Atwater Kent Museum

Architects

Rudy D'Allessandro, JS Cornell
Shawn Evans, Atkins Olshin Architects
John Hanson, Hanson General Contracting
Bob Hotes, Milner Carr Conservation
Emanuel Kelly, Kelly Maiello
Arlene Matzkin, Friday Architects
Suzanne Pentz, Keast and Hood
Vincent Rivera, SRK Architects
Rachel Schade, Schade and Bolender Architects
Robert Thomas, Campbell Thomas
Bill Whittaker, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania
Hyman Myers, Vitetta Group

Community Groups and Community Development Corporations

Della Clark, The Enterprise Center
Laura Siena, West Mt. Airy Neighbors
Penelope Giles, Francisville Neighborhood Development Corporation
Gabriel Mandujano, The Enterprise Center
Pam Bridgeforth, Philadelphia Association of CDCs
Linda Dotter, Community Design Collaborative
Kira Strong, People's Emergency Center CDC

Historic District Residents

Richard Cole, Queen Village
Terry Henry, Overbrook Farms
Virginia Trosino, Washington Square West
Dane Wells, Center City
Steven Weixler, Society Hill
Wilhemina Herbert, Garden Court

Historic Sites and House Museums

Tracey Beck, American Swedish Historical Museum
Ross Mitchell, Laurel Hill Cemetery

Stephanie Phillips, Bartram's Garden
Charlie Tonetti, Independence National Historical Park
Patrick Hotard, Glen Foerd on the Delaware
Beth Kowalchick, Strawberry Mansion
Martha Moffitt, Burlhome Mansion/Ryerss Museum & Library
Diane Richardson, Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion
Eileen Rojas, Wyck
Franklin Vagnone, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks
Jean Wolf, Woodlands Mansion & Cemetery
David Young, Cliveden
Melissa Trotter, Strawberry Mansion
Ellie Pennimen, Lemon Hill

Historical Societies

Sylvia Myers, Roxborough Historical Society
Frank Neipold, Chestnut Hill Historical Society
Andrea Neipold, Chestnut Hill Historical Society
Debbie Klak, Historical Society of Frankford

Commercial Corridors and Community Development Corporations

Rose Gray, APM
Patricia Blakely, The Merchants Fund
Jim Flaherty, Commerce Department, City of Philadelphia
James Wright, People's Emergency Center
Susan Callanen, Philadelphia LISC
Andy Toy, The Enterprise Center
Bernard Guet, Roxborough Development Corporation

Preservation Professionals

Paul Steinke, Reading Terminal Market
David Brownlee, University of Pennsylvania Art History
Bruce Laverty, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Susanna Barruco, Kise, Straw & Kolodner
Laura Spina, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
David G DeLong, University of Pennsylvania Preservation
Peter Benton, John Milner Associates
Robert Powers, Powers & Co.

Credits

This report was written by Donna Ann Harris with Alexander Balloon. Notes were taken and compiled by Alexander Balloon, Laura Keegan and Jackie Wiess. The cover was designed by Alexander Balloon.

Biographies

Donna Ann Harris is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that works in three practice areas: downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation and organizational development. Since starting her firm and during her career, Donna has assisted citizen groups and government agencies to identify appropriate reuses for threatened historic properties that ensure the long term preservation and maintenance of the site. Throughout her twenty five years in the preservation movement, she has led start up and mature statewide preservation organizations as an executive, was first staff member of a land and building conservation organization, and led a wide variety of projects for the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation (one of the precursor organizations of the Preservation Alliance where she was the Vice President for Program Development. Donna's new book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Homes* was published by AltaMira Press in April 2007. She has published articles about reuse of historic house museums in *History News* and *Forum Journal*. Her articles about advocacy, membership development and Business Improvement Districts have been published in *Main Street News*.

Alexander Balloon is a second-year graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Design. His undergraduate degree is from the College of Wooster in Urban Studies and History. He has worked with Heritage Consulting Inc. on a variety of assignments as an intern. Working with another local organization, Alex completed a variety of projects in the City of Philadelphia including documentation, feasibility, and re-use studies for historic sites and properties. His most recent project includes drafting a neighborhood historic preservation strategic plan for the University City Area of Philadelphia. He was also a summer fellow with the Cleveland Foundation, where he worked with a local economic development organization. Alex worked on a number of preservation projects in Northeast Ohio, including a re-use project to convert a historic Craftsman Bungalow into a dental office.

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