



## **PRESERVATION ALLIANCE**

*for greater philadelphia*

For Immediate Release

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### **Alliance Urges Preservation of Historic Library Branches Mayor Nutter Should Consider Historic Significance of Carnegie Branches**

(December 8, 2008) – The Preservation Alliance today called on Mayor Michael Nutter to reconsider plans to close four historic branch libraries because of the city’s budget crisis. The four libraries, each constructed with grants from early-20<sup>th</sup>-century philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, are Holmesburg (built 1907), Haddington (1915), Logan (1918) and Kingsessing (1919).

The City should consider the impact on historic buildings in its care before closing or disposing of such properties, said Alliance Executive Director John Andrew Gallery.

If any of these four libraries must be closed, the Alliance stated the City has an obligation to insure that the properties are listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places before declaring them surplus property and making them available for sale or lease. Listing on the Register would give the Philadelphia Historical Commission authority over any future adaptation or alteration to the properties. It is the Alliance’s intention to nominate the libraries to the Philadelphia Register.

“It is our view that these libraries should not be closed,” Gallery wrote Mayor Nutter. “They are important community landmarks and that status derives from their function as libraries as much as from their historical and architectural significance. We recognize that the City must make decisions about budget cuts based on operating expense issues. But where such cuts affect historic resources under the City’s care, the impact on those historic resources should be a factor in making decisions. In this case, we are not confident that the historic significance of these properties has been taken into consideration. Moreover, we are concerned that if they are vacated as libraries and become surplus city properties they will either decline or be sold or leased in ways that will jeopardize the historic value of the properties.”

Gallery expressed special concern about the Holmesburg library, which was recently identified by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in Washington DC as the “quintessential example” of Carnegie libraries in Philadelphia.

Andrew Carnegie supported the construction of 1,600 libraries in the United States. These were the first buildings built to be public libraries in the city of Philadelphia. Carnegie’s contribution to Philadelphia was among the largest he made, second only to that for New York City.

Besides their historical significance, the branch libraries are also architecturally important. Logan was designed by John T. Windrim, also architect of the Franklin

Institute, and Haddington was designed by Albert Kelsey and Paul Cret, one of Philadelphia's great architectural figures.

*The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes. To learn more, visit [www.PreservationAlliance.com](http://www.PreservationAlliance.com).*

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