



PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

for greater philadelphia

For Immediate Release

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Preservation Alliance Welcomes New Board Chair and Staff

(August 4, 2008) – The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia recently welcomed several new staff and board members and elected Katherine Dowdell, AIA, of Blackney Hayes Architects as its new board chair.

Elise Vider was named deputy director, a new staff position created to strengthen senior management leadership of the Alliance. In her previous position, she served for eight years as director of communications at the Center City District.

Ms. Vider has a long history with the Preservation Alliance. Most recently, she was an active member of the Alliance's board of directors starting in 2005, serving on the advocacy and development committees. She also has served on the Preservation Achievement Awards jury for many years

Ms. Vider was also on the staff of the Alliance from the time of the organization's establishment in 1996 until 2000. Prior to that, she served on the staff of the Preservation Coalition, one of the Alliance's predecessor organizations.

Ms. Vider has a master's degree in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a co-founder and member of the steering committee of the Design Advocacy Group ("DAG") and, before moving to Philadelphia, served as chair of the Haddonfield NJ Historic Preservation Commission.

In an earlier stage of her career, she was an award-winning journalist, specializing in real estate, architecture, design and historic preservation.

Katherine Dowdell, AIA, the Alliance's new board chair, has over 20 years experience in architecture, interior design and historic preservation, and her special expertise includes the restoration, conversion and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. At Blackney Hayes, she has successfully managed the renovation of a historic paper factory, dating to the late 1800s, and the conversion of a power plant to office space.

Kathy has been on the Alliance's board since 2003, most recently serving as vice chair. She is also active with the Philadelphia AIA Historic Preservation Committee and the Association for Women in Architecture.

Kathy, a resident of West Philadelphia, is also a past president of the University City Historical Society and was closely involved in the efforts of the Friends of Walnut West to save the historic Carnegie library building at 40th and Walnut streets.

Peter C. Benton, AIA, the Alliance's new board vice-chair, is a senior associate at John Milner Associate, with over 25 years experience in the design and execution of architecture, planning and heritage development projects. Central to his work has been a recognition and respect for the character and historical development of buildings and the landscapes in which they are located.

Sabra Smith joined the staff as the Alliance's new advocacy associate. She holds a master's in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania where her training included preservation policy, law, economics, historic research and documentation, architectural history and urban studies.

Previously, Ms. Smith worked as a historian in the Preservation Assistance office of the National Park Service with an emphasis on National Historic Landmarks. Before that, she worked at the Lower Merion Conservancy. Prior to moving to Philadelphia, Ms. Smith worked in public relations in New York City

Melissa Jest joined the Alliance staff as neighborhood preservation program coordinator, a new position that will expand and enhance the Alliance's neighborhood programs under Director of Neighborhood Preservation Programs Patrick Hauck. The coordinator's focus is on outreach to African American residents of Philadelphia.

Ms. Jest relocated to Philadelphia from Savannah, where she served as neighborhood coordinator for the Historic Savannah Foundation and was the first African American to join the foundation as fulltime preservation staff.

Her work with residents in Savannah's historic neighborhoods earned her awards and recognition as a National Trust for Historic Preservation Emerging Leader in 2001. She holds a master's of urban studies from Savannah State University.

Funding for this position is assisted by a Partners in the Field challenge grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, made possible by a gift from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust.

Holly Keefe is the Alliance's new director of membership development. Ms. Keefe comes to the Alliance from the historic Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial in Camden, NJ, where she served as membership and development director. Prior to that, Ms. Keefe served as executive director of the Philadelphia Music Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting Philadelphia music, which was best known for its Walk of Fame along South Broad Street. She has also worked as project coordinator of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, Inc.

At its most recent board of directors meeting, **Christophe Terlizzi** of Citizens Bank was elected treasurer and **Rosemarie Fabien** was named secretary. Elected as new directors were **John Carr, FAIA**, of Milner + Carr Conservation, **Michael Holleman, AIA**, of Vitetta and **Diane-Louise (D-L) Wormley** of NeighborhoodsNow.

The Preservation Alliance wishes to express its great appreciation to outgoing directors **Carl E. Dranoff, John D. Milner, FAIA, Romona Riscoe Benson** and **William Schwartz** for their dedicated service and to past board chair **Marian Kornilowicz** for his excellent leadership.

The Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia actively promotes the appreciation, protection and revitalization of the Philadelphia region's historic buildings, communities and landscapes.

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