

PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Executive Update

JOHN ANDREW GALLERY-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUMMER 2007

Dear Friends,

Twice each year I try to step back from the historic preservation issues that face the Preservation Alliance each week and share with primary contributors to the Alliance the bigger issues that are on my mind. This is a very useful exercise because it helps me focus on the long-term vision that is essential to guide the week to week decisions. I hope these thoughts will be of interest to you and that you will share your reactions, suggestions and comments on these reflections with me.

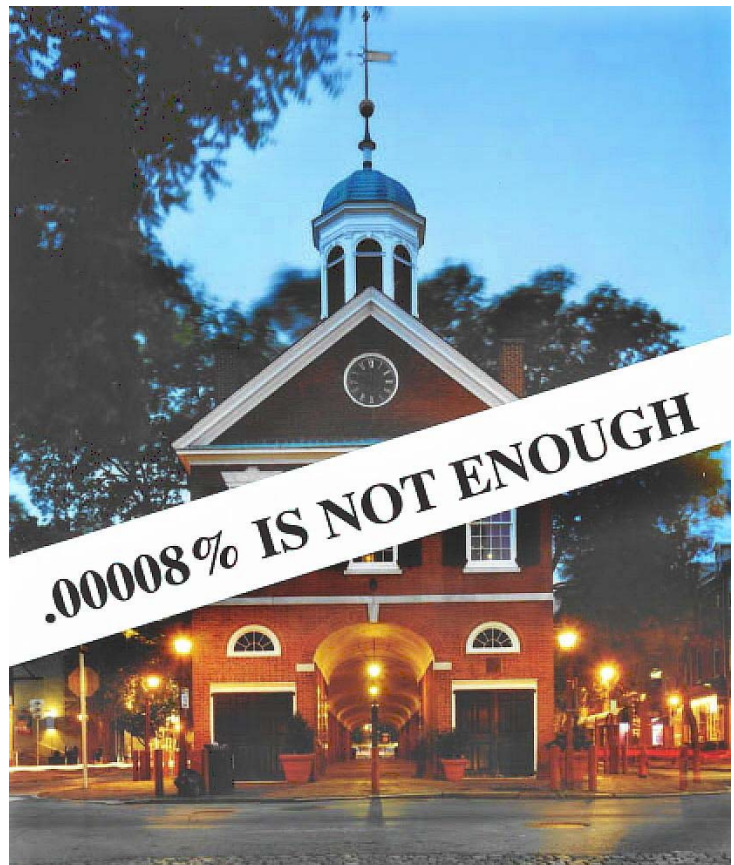
There is so much of interest going on right now related to historic preservation that I could easily write you a even much longer letter than this one has turned out to be. I know that some of you do not live and work in Philadelphia, so you will forgive me if this letter focuses primarily on Philadelphia issues. But the issues that concern me about Philadelphia also relate to the surrounding region. First let me tell you about two recent difficulties and then about an exciting and inspiring new direction for our work.

IMMEDIATE ISSUES

Most people think that the Preservation Alliance focuses its advocacy efforts on protecting and preserving historic buildings. In fact we do, in a variety of different ways. But we also focus a great amount of our advocacy attention on public policy—on efforts to protect Philadelphia's historic preservation ordinance and on efforts to influence the policies of government. One of our primary advocacy objectives has been to increase the budget of the Philadelphia

Historical Commission. Last fall I met with Mayor Street to express our concern about the inadequacy of funding for the Commission. He agreed to look into the situation and had the Managing Director evaluate the Commission's needs. I had every expectation that Mayor Street would include additional funding for the Commission in his budget recommendations to City Council, but he did not. We then turned our attention to City Council. We spoke at the budget hearings, presenting testimony about the \$2 Billion dollars in investment that has occurred in Philadelphia in the past eight years as a result of the adaptive use of historic properties and the 7, 000 units of new housing it has created. I wanted to impress upon them that the historic resources in Philadelphia and in this region are tremendously important assets for economic and community development. In addition, we created a postcard with what we thought was a provocative slogan: **.00008% is Not Enough.**

The current budget of the Historical Commission is merely .0008% of the total City budget. We know that over 800 postcards were sent to City Council President Anna Verna because we had them returned to us to deliver; but I believe many were also mailed directly to her. Yet, I am told that in the final budget discussions only two members of City Council supported an increase in the Commission's budget.



At the same time as we were working on this effort other colleagues were working on a similar issue—trying to get the state legislature to preserve funding for historic preservation and to provide authority for a state grant program for investment in historic properties by developers and homeowners. These funds are primarily located in the Keystone Fund and in the Growing Greener program, which also include funds for parks and open space. The budget compromise announced by the Governor and representatives of the legislature just recently was based on a 50% reduction in the Keystone programs and the elimination of funding for historic preservation grants in the Growing Greener budget. Although a final decision on this has been postponed until the fall, it is clear that these programs were considered expendable—and they are still in jeopardy.

These two situations indicate that notwithstanding the general appreciation for the historic resources of the city and state, notwithstanding the obvious relationship to tourism and the economy of the city and state, historic preservation is not a high priority for either city or state government when it comes to the allocation of resources.

These two circumstances have resulted in a change in my views about the Alliance's advocacy efforts for the coming year. While I feel we must continue to advocate for the preservation and protection of historic properties, I think we must now give greater emphasis to a focus on public policy. In Philadelphia we need to take the lead in building support for historic preservation as a high priority with a new mayor and especially with City Council. At the state level, we need to become a more active partner with preservation agencies in Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, and with environmental and conservation organizations whose support from state government is linked with ours.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This concern for public policy relates directly to a larger concern and objective. A year ago, at the Alliance board and staff retreat, I proposed that we focus our attention on the creation of a Comprehensive Preservation Plan for Philadelphia and a Comprehensive Survey of Historic Resources. The idea seemed both daunting and exciting. The board encouraged me to pursue this vision. Over the past two years we have investigated different aspects of undertaking such an effort. The idea is timely: Philadelphia is about to have a new mayor and City Council has recently established a Zoning Commission, which provides the opportunity to examine procedures for planning as well as zoning, including historic preservation.

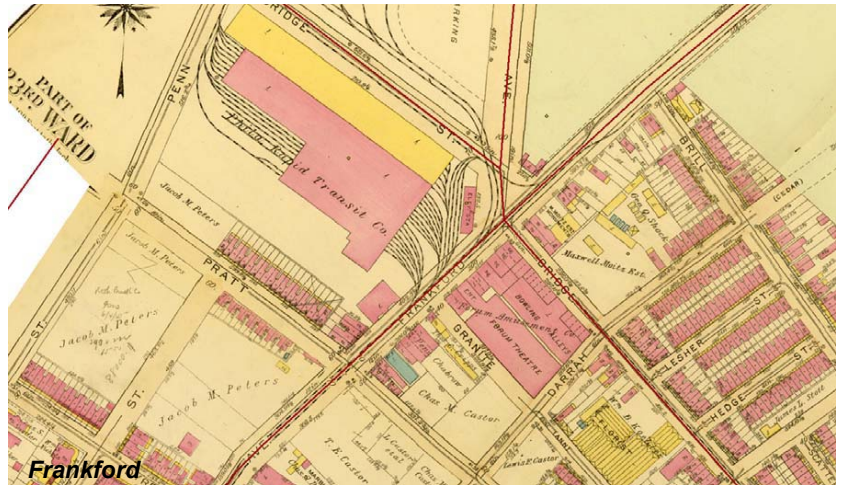
When I first proposed this idea I felt that undertaking a comprehensive survey of the historic resources in Philadelphia was overwhelming and so I set out to investigate whether such contemporary technology as GIS mapping and digital photography might make large surveys more feasible than in the past. With grants from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the William Penn Foundation we have conducted four studies, which I would like to briefly describe.

- * Our first study focused on determining how many of the historic resources of Philadelphia have been identified and documented by previous surveys. There are approximately 80 historic districts (National Register and local) in Philadelphia encompassing 22,000 properties. However, an examination of the data for these districts by the Cultural Resources Consulting Group indicated that many had no survey data at all, and for those that did the surveys had not been updated since the early 1980s. In fact, only 4% of the properties in Philadelphia have ever been surveyed for their historic significance. This is appalling for a city so rich in historic resources.
- * For our second study we undertook the creation of an historic district nomination for the Parkside community in West Philadelphia to test out the use of GIS mapping technology and digital photography. Under the direction of consultant's Dominique Hawkins and Judy Peters, graduate students surveyed and recorded all the data for the neighborhood in one weekend. A further test for a second historic district, the Awbury Arboretum district in Germantown, proved equally effective and efficient. Nominations for both neighborhoods as historic districts were submitted to the Historical Commission in 2006, but neither has been acted on due to the lack of staff, a result of the lack of a sufficient budget as noted above.



Parkside

* This year we undertook the test of a second methodology to try to determine how to identify historic resources in a neighborhood that was not an historic district. Working again with Dominique and Judy as consultants, we explored an approach that compared digitally scanned historic atlases with current property data in order to determine via GIS overlays which historic properties appeared to still remain in the Frankford neighborhood. This also produced very exciting results.



* Our last study was undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. Under Randy Mason's directions, a survey was conducted of major cities in the US and Canada to see which cities had or were undertaking comprehensive plans and surveys as we have been discussing. This has produced some interesting results and helpful precedents. Only one city is attempting to develop the type of comprehensive approach we are discussing: Los Angeles. For several years the Getty Conservation Institute has been assisting Los Angeles develop an overall approach to its historic preservation policies. I visited Los Angeles last month to talk with representatives of the Getty, the City Planning Department, and non-profit agencies involved in this effort. I was pleased to find that the approach we have been contemplating and experimenting with is very similar to the approach they are in the process of implementing.

I am very excited about this work. I think it represents a new direction for historic preservation that is of national importance. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to bring this work to broader attention. I have recently been appointed chair of the Big Cities Group of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The annual Big Cities meeting will be in Philadelphia in 2008 and the Trust has agreed to have the primary focus of the agenda a presentation of the most innovative of these efforts to create comprehensive preservation plans and surveys that will enable historic preservation to be a more important component of the comprehensive plans of American cities.

By the way, these studies will be available online on the Alliance's revised website which will be launched Summer 2007.

Thus far, these efforts have been piecemeal and minimally funded. However, I am very optimistic that the Preservation Alliance may receive a grant this fall that will enable us to continue these efforts in a more systematic manner.

Needless to say, your financial contributions to the Preservation Alliance help to make efforts like the ones described in this letter possible. I hope that when your membership renewal comes up you will renew, and perhaps upgrade your membership; I hope that you will continue to contribute generously to our annual appeal—and perhaps even make spontaneous contributions at other times during the year! And I hope, most of all, that you will continue to be a vocal advocate for the preservation of the historic resources and historic character of your own community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "John Andrew Gallery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Andrew Gallery
Executive Director
john@preservationalliance.com



Big Kids Play Date at Smith Playground



Young Friends Happy
Hour Sail



Professional Partner Hard Hat Tour of the Perelman Building

PLEASE CHECK THE PRESERVATION ALLIANCE'S ONLINE EVENTS CALENDAR FOR INFORMATION ON OUR FALL 2007 EVENTS INCLUDING : HOMEOWNER WORKSHOPS, YOUNG FRIENDS SATURDAY SALONS, THE 2ND ANNUAL FREAKY FRIDAY TOUR SERIES, LECTURES, PROFESSIONAL PARTNER HARD HAT TOURS AND MORE!

WWW.PRESERVATIONALLIANCE.COM

**PRESERVATION ALLIANCE FOR GREATER PHILADELPHIA
1616 WALNUT STREET SUITE 1620 PHILADELPHIA PA 19103**