

Forming *Preservation Buffalo Niagara* – Frequently Asked Questions

What is Happening? The Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier and the Preservation Coalition of Erie County are joining forces with the goal of creating a larger, more substantial, professional, sufficiently staffed organization. The name of the combined organization will be *Preservation Buffalo Niagara*

Why is this needed? Buffalo needs to have its historic preservation movement operate at a higher level. Our organizations have been fragile and Buffalo deserves more! Buffalo's constituency for preservation is too small and our wonderful architectural heritage is inadequately understood by city residents. Information about preservation techniques has not been adequately spread to allied agencies and neighborhood organizations. Many areas of Buffalo, especially eastside neighborhoods, have seen little preservation activity. Preservationists are seldom consulted early enough in a project's development to provide constructive input. Better relationships need to be developed with state and national preservation organizations. Too often, preservationists engage in an issue only at the last minute, earning the reputation of being obstructionists.

Is this a merger? Most people will describe it as such, but it is actually a consolidation of operations.

Are the Landmark Society and the Preservation Coalition being dissolved? No! With name changes, the Landmark Society will be the combined organization's on-going operating entity, continuing to utilize its non-profit tax exempt status and its charter from the New York Department of Education. The Preservation Coalition as an entity will also remain, to be renamed *Preservation Development Buffalo Niagara* to potentially (but not immediately) function as an affiliated real estate development corporation.

How will *Preservation Buffalo Niagara* be governed? Through a Board of Trustees operating under a new set of bylaws. The initial board will have 21 members, with 11 selected from the current boards of the Landmark Society and the Preservation Coalition. The other 10 trustees will be community members that currently are not on either board.

How can I ask questions or find more information? Members are invited to an informal information session on October 7, 2008 at 5:00 at the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society. By-laws and other related documents are posted on a website www.landmark-niagara.org or www.preservationcoalition.org. Conference calls are being set up, too. Please call Steve Weiss at 856-1700 if you would like to join one of these calls.

How will this all come about? Members of the Landmark Society and the Preservation Coalition will meet at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 16th at the Karpeles Museum on North Street and Elmwood. Separately, members of each organization will be asked to ratify the recommendations of their respective boards on the consolidation and name changes. If both approve, then together the new, combined membership of *Preservation Buffalo Niagara* will vote to adopt its new bylaws and elect its first board of trustees.

Will my membership continue? If you are currently a member of the Preservation Coalition or the Landmark Society, you will immediately and automatically become a member of *Preservation Buffalo Niagara*. Renewal dates will remain unchanged.

What is envisioned? The plan begins by staffing a multifaceted preservation organization--with experienced, professionally trained staff including an executive director, preservation specialist, education coordinator and office support. There will be a critical mass of staff and activities to bring preservation to a new level but a small enough core to have a realistic ability to maintain long-term financial stability.

What is the next step? A campaign to raise funds to support the organization will continue. Proposals have been sent to key foundations and more are being prepared; the Baird Foundation has already approved a \$50,000 grant. Foundation funds will be critical for the initial phase of three years, giving the organization time to develop on-going revenue sources, including increased membership, events, public and other revenue sources. With successful fundraising, an executive director can be in place by January.

What will be the organization's first initiative? If selected to participate, the National Trust will provide matching funds and guidance to enable *Preservation Buffalo Niagara* to start the Shared Historic Preservation Field Service Program. The Preservation Specialist will provide a virtual tool box of preservation advice and technical assistance to neighborhood and allied organizations, public agencies, and property owners throughout the region. Unique in the state, this program will be a collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Preservation League of New York State. In essence, these agencies will utilize *Preservation Buffalo Niagara* as their local contact; none have staff in the Buffalo area.

What was the catalyst for this change? Multiple factors converged. For several years, there has been a deliberate focus on architectural resources in Buffalo by organizations at the state-wide level: NYSCA, SHPO, and the Preservation League. Their increased involvement helped to train volunteers and stretch our imagination to use preservation practices for greater benefit at all levels of the community. The successful campaign to bring the 2011 National Trust for Historic Preservation's conference to Buffalo enabled preservation, civic, and foundation leaders to work together in a new way. This effort culminated in a very successful dinner (June 2007) where 430 people welcomed the National Trust president to Buffalo. The National Trust responded with greater involvement in a series of important preservation issues and support for developing a more dynamic preservation movement for the city. In 2006 the Landmark Society and the Preservation Coalition had started co-administering Buffalo Tours; doing so helped both groups share ideas for a stronger preservation movement. At the National Trust's suggestion, with encouragement from the Preservation League, SHPO, and NYSCA, these organizations and the Campaign for Greater Buffalo engaged a nationally known preservation consultant to assess opportunities and challenges in Buffalo. Responding to the report's recommendation for a more unified preservation movement and the need for a more substantial preservation organization, the Landmark Society and Preservation Coalition created a joint Exploratory Committee. Board members also researched and assessed 32 preservation organizations from around the country. The Baird Foundation's Catherine Schweitzer, recently appointed as one of two National Trust Advisors for New York State, was asked by the Trust and others to help; she agreed to lead a Transition Committee. This committee, together with Henry McCartney, the long-time former director of Rochester's Landmark Society (1984-2005), and in concert with both organizations, created the vision and plan for *Preservation Buffalo Niagara*. One of the first projects was to co-host a state-wide Preservation Colleagues meeting in June in Buffalo with the Preservation League.

