Our New Strategic Plan

Preservation has a strong track record in Western New York with many impressive wins. The City of Buffalo’s locally and nationally designated districts, for example, have proven to be racially and economically diverse, incredibly resilient, and reliable generators of economic growth and job creation.

Unfortunately, traditional preservation approaches have not always served all residents. Large-scale encroachments and persistent disinvestment have destroyed historic fabric and displaced residents. The history and contributions of indigenous and minority community members have often been marginalized or wholly excluded.

With our new Strategic Plan, PBN commits to reforming traditional preservation practices, addressing their inequities, and expanding their reach. We will demonstrate that historic preservation can be fully representative and that saving historic resources of all kinds can celebrate the region’s diverse history, catalyze economic development, support environmental sustainability, advance social justice, and contribute to community health and wellbeing.

Our plan includes three guiding principles to serve as a framework for decision making and planning for the next three years:

1. PBN believes it has a role to play in creating a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and accessible community. All its programs, policies, and projects will be aligned to meet these objectives.

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Dear friends,

By the time you are reading this, my final letter to you as Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara, I will no longer be leading this amazing organization and will have moved on to new challenges for the new year. And while I’m excited for what lies ahead, I will miss the PBN team and it will be bittersweet to watch the organization move on without me.

I am so proud of what we’ve accomplished over the last seven years, and of the team that has come together to ensure that the organization will continue to be successful beyond my tenure. It has always been a team effort and there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that this organization will continue to thrive and grow in directions I could only dream. The strategic plan will act as a guidepost for those efforts, and ongoing projects like the Eliza Quirk House and the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund will continue to ensure that our work meets our goals of using preservation to create more equitable, vibrant, and sustainable neighborhoods. Having invested in hiring and supporting a diverse, highly capable staff means that we will continue to be able to offer the technical assistance and advocacy you’ve come to expect from us.

I know that I always say that we could not do this work without you, our members and supporters. But I say it because it is absolutely true. And I hope that you will continue to support this wonderful organization so that we can continue to realize the potential of our historic communities for building the future that Western New York deserves.

Thank you for being such an important part of this journey, and I will look forward to seeing you out and about enjoying our beautiful shared heritage.

Jessie Fisher

Preservation Buffalo Niagara is currently seeking a new Executive Director to lead our organization. During the search period, our Director of Operations Corey Fabian-Barrett is serving as Interim Executive Director.
The Eliza Quirk Boarding House, located at 72 Sycamore Street on the East Side of Buffalo at the edge of downtown, is a pre-Civil War boarding house designed and constructed circa 1848 for its original owner, Eliza Quirk, a well-known courtesan, who occupied the building until her death in 1868. The structure is a simple, red brick vernacular double rowhouse, a typical pre-Civil War design for urban residential buildings.

While the architect (if any) is unknown, the boarding house appears to have been built as both Eliza Quirk’s primary residence and a boarding house with likely additional use as a brothel throughout this period. It is one of the few remaining intact boarding houses and pre-Civil War buildings in downtown.

72 Sycamore is located within the Impact Zone of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, and its preservation is seen as an important component of continuing revitalization efforts in this area.

The Eliza Quirk House represents an important piece of Buffalo’s history, one that is often overshadowed by the high-style buildings and famous architects that the city is known for. However, Buffalo wouldn’t be Buffalo without the people who built, owned, and made their homes in buildings like 72 Sycamore. Uncovering its story has been one of PBN’s highlights from the last several years, and we look forward to helping write its next chapter.

In December 2019, Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) acquired 72 Sycamore Street with plans to protect this landmarked building and bring new life to this part of Sycamore Street. Since then, we’ve been hard at work imagining a future for this historic space and fundraising to support rehabilitation work.

With plans complete and construction scheduled to begin later this year, we are thrilled to announce our vision for the completed 72 Sycamore Street rehabilitation. When the project is complete, the building will feature:

- 2,400 square feet of office space for PBN and other place-based community organizations
- 2,000+ square feet of meeting and event space
- Buffalo’s first Preservation Resource Center
- Dedicated indoor and outdoor space for community and education events

For PBN, the 72 Sycamore Street project represents an opportunity to roll up our sleeves and actively preserve a vital piece of our community’s historic fabric, rather than advocating for other developers to take action.

The project also aligns with our new Strategic Plan (see page 1 for details) as PBN grows its physical presence in the communities we serve and steps into a more active role in preserving the Buffalo-Niagara region.

What is the Eliza Quirk House?

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NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS

Three properties in Niagara Falls were added to the National Register of Historic Places this fall, two on September 9 and another on November 15.

The Sagamore Apartments and Shops on Main Street is a group of buildings constructed for Eugene C. Butler, a local florist. He commissioned the three-story corner apartment building, designed in the Tudor Revival style by architects Kirkpatrick & Cannon, in 1926 as both a storefront for the family business and a personal residence. The following year, Butler commissioned the one-story commercial building south of the apartment. These buildings speak to a time of economic growth in Niagara Falls and are outstanding local examples of the Tudor Revival style.

Immediately next door to the north, the Hall Apartments on Third Street were constructed in 1928 for Dr. Frank Hall, a prominent physician in the city, who had both his office and residence in the building. The Neoclassical-style structure was designed and built by local contractor the Walter S. Johnson Building Company. Its most distinctive feature is its elegant entrance featuring columns, a transom, and sidelights. It is significant as an early-twentieth-century mixed-use building associated with the growth of the city and changes in healthcare trends during this period.

The most recently listed property is a collection of buildings on Niagara Street between Third and Fourth Streets. Comprised of the former Niagara Gazette headquarters and a row of mixed-use buildings, this fully intact block was developed between 1893 and 1923 and is significant for its representation of the former importance of Niagara Street as a commercial corridor. The Gazette building was constructed in 1914, with an addition to the west in 1923, and the paper occupied the building until 2015.

LANDMARK UPDATES

Buffalo

On October 4, the local landmark application for Saint Adalbert Roman Catholic Basilica was approved! This application was prepared and supported by PBN through our Sacred Spaces Assistance Program. Completed in 1891 by architect Raymond Huber, Saint Adalbert’s is an excellent example of Romanesque style architecture and is the only basilica church located in the city of Buffalo.
Also in October, the local landmark application for the Niagara Frontier Growers Co-operative Market/Clinton Bailey Farmers Market progressed to a public hearing before the Common Council’s Legislation Committee. However, despite being recommended for approval by the Preservation Board and having the support of Fillmore District Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski, it has not progressed to a full Common Council vote. Instead, it has been inexplicably tabled. PBN provided research and advisement during the preparation of this application and is in full support of its approval. Located at 1443 Clinton Street, the market was built from 1930-31 as a successor for the congested Elk Street Market and has been a food hub on the East Side ever since.

ADVOCACY

2018 Main Street in Niagara Falls has been threatened with demolition by the City. Known as the L.S. Silberberg Building, it was constructed in 1908 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2020 as part of the Main Street Historic District. Over its lifespan, the Romanesque Revival-style building has been the home of businesses including the Jenss Department Store and F.W. Woolworth’s, as well as a masonic hall. While it has been vacant for some time and exhibits significant condition issues, it is by no means beyond repair. The loss of this building would be detrimental to Main Street (which has already lost so much historic fabric), risking structural damage to the neighboring structures and potentially jeopardizing the redevelopment that property owner Blue Cardinal currently has in progress.

PBN is working with the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, and other interested parties to advocate against this unnecessary demolition.

MUNICIPAL OUTREACH PROGRAM UPDATES

Two local communities have recently taken concrete strides to preserve their built environments. In August, the Town of West Seneca passed a preservation ordinance which created a historic preservation commission (HPC) and provides for the designation of local landmarks. The Town of Hamburg also recently created an HPC though an update to their preservation ordinance. PBN’s Christiana Limniatis and Tabitha O’Connell attended the Hamburg HPC meeting on November 28th to answer questions and advise on the HPC’s next steps as they plan the preservation projects they’ll be undertaking. PBN will be continuing to support their work in 2023 by offering trainings and partnering with them on public programs.
In preservation, it can often feel like the focus is solely on grand rehabilitation and restoration projects, like the Guaranty Building or the Darwin Martin House. However, an essential part of preservation is the ongoing and regular maintenance and repair of our older buildings, as this allows us to avoid the need for elaborate and expensive rehab projects. That’s why it’s important for homeowners to get into the habit of seasonal maintenance and repair tasks. The more proactive you are about home repairs on your older house, the more money you save in the long run.

To help you and your home get ready for spring, here’s a rundown of PBN’s top cleaning and inspection tasks to keep your historic home in tip-top shape.

**FOUNDATIONS, MASONRY AND STUCCO**

Whether your home is a fully masonry structure, or just has a stone foundation and brick chimney, masonry is an incredibly common material and integral to the structural and architectural integrity of your historic home.

As part of your spring cleaning, you’ll want to not only clean masonry elements to remove general dirt, grime, or trash, but also to remove any organic material that might have adhered to it. That means not just removing any dead leaves or live algae and moss, but also removing ivy or other vegetation growing on or around the masonry elements. These plants can increase trapped moisture and may damage or loosen mortar and stucco. Always make sure to use the gentlest means possible to clean masonry, as abrasive cleaning methods and materials can cause irreversible damage.

For foundations, always ensure that the venting is cleared to help control moisture, and that downspouts are appropriately pointed away from the house, or securely connected to drainage, so as to discourage moisture from collecting near the foundation.

While it might be tempting to just throw a coat of paint or a waterproof coating onto your foundation, that might cause more damage in the end. By applying paint or a waterproof coating to previously unpainted/untreated masonry, you’re creating a vapor barrier that prevents the natural movement of moisture buildup inside your house due to your heating or cooling system. When this moisture can’t be released, it will find other places to travel, wreaking havoc in its wake.

Once your masonry is nice and clean, then you can assess any loose stucco or damaged mortar. When repairing those elements, make sure to use an in-kind material that matches the historic mortar in all qualities including strength, color, texture, and tooling.

**ROOFS**

A weather-tight roof is obviously one of the most important features of a building. Roofs are also major character-defining features that can articulate your home’s architectural style or building typology.

Each spring, it’s important to check your roof for small holes and cracked, warped, or missing shingles, whether they be asphalt, slate, or tile. Make sure to remove any algae, moss, mold, or other organic material that might be present. Just as with masonry elements, over time the collection of organic material and the damaging moisture it retains will degrade roofing material and penetrate the support structure.

Also check your chimney for cracked, crumbling,
or missing mortar, as well as for loose, missing, or rusted metal flashing at the chimney, valleys, ridges, or walls. Make sure to repair/replace in-kind any loose, rotted, or missing gutters or downspouts, all while making sure that the gutters are clean and drain correctly.

WOODWORK

No matter the quality, all building materials will deteriorate over time. But for exterior woodwork, that deterioration is directly tied to environmental influences like moisture, sunlight, insects, vegetation, wind, and mold, just to name a few. However, with regular maintenance and repair, you can dramatically slow down the rate of deterioration.

As with the above materials, the first step of your woodwork spring cleaning is to clean off all the general dirt and grime that has accumulated over the winter. If any of it is extra grimy, stick to using mild household cleaners and water, avoiding high pressure power washing or abrasive cleaning methods that could damage your historic wood siding and detailing. And you guessed it: make sure to remove any organic material (that includes dead leaves and cobwebs!).

Next, you’ll want to inspect all those wood elements to see if there’s any extreme damage that need to be replaced in-kind, like a broken balustrade or split floorboard, or if there are minimal repairs that can be done, like sanding and repainting. While we usually think of exterior paint as a cosmetic treatment for a house, properly applied and maintained stain and paint serves as a protective coat that helps the wood elements last longer.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Just as with roofs, your windows and doors are major components to the function of your house as well as significant character-defining features that articulate the age and style of your home. Properly maintained historic windows and doors are energy efficient and sustainable, having been built with higher quality materials and craftsmanship than modern replacement versions. Especially with historic windows, it’s important to keep in mind that they are inherently designed to be repaired and regularly tuned-up. It’s when we fail to keep them in working order that deterioration can accelerate, requiring a larger rehabilitation project or even replacement.

Dirty doors and windows don’t work their best, so again, make sure to clean both the interiors and exteriors. Stick to just water and mild detergent, skipping abrasive or chemical cleaners. Make sure that your window jambs are free of debris or chipped paint, which might interfere with the window sash opening and closing. Make sure the sash cord is still connected to the window weight and sash, repairing as needed.

Broken, cracked, or loose pieces of glass should be removed and reglazed (check out PBN’s YouTube channel for a how-to video if you want to tackle it yourself, or contact one of the several area contractors and hardware stores that offer that service). Remove and replace any old weatherstripping as needed. If you have separate storms and screens, make that switch when temperatures allow. Whether they’re separate pieces or combination storms/screens, make sure to inspect the screen mesh, repairing/replacing as needed to make sure no wayward bugs make their way inside.

No matter what your spring cleaning and repair tasks may be, be mindful to avoid approaches that cut corners, no matter how quick, cheap, or easy they may seem, as they’ll ultimately cost you more in the long run. Maintaining traditional methods and materials on your historic home is the most sustainable way to deal with your property from both an environmental and economic standpoint. With that proper maintenance, your historic home can last for centuries.
PRESERVATION BUFFALO NIAGARA | WINTER 2023

Why does preservation matter?
Preservation is more than coating a building in amber and keeping it frozen in time. The key to preservation is keeping sites relevant; by evolving and changing with the needs of society, we are able to keep connections to the past. I always enjoy the sense that people have lived their lives here before, and how similar our experiences might be. Working downtown, I just know that workers here from the 1830s on had the same conversations about weather, traffic, and new construction projects, just like today. But if all of the buildings had stayed with their original uses, would we have any historic structures left at all?

What is your favorite local landmark?
Is it too cliché to say City Hall? Oh well, who cares, I’ll say it! The elegance and power that Art Deco architecture can invoke is awe-inspiring, as it is such a fine line to be on. Not only do I find the stunning murals, relief sculpture, and elevator doors special, but also the sleek and simple office hallways on the upper levels. Of course, I could not go without mentioning the pièce de résistance, the observation deck. I have fond memories of going up there as a child, and I still enjoy going up there today! It gives me a chance to see all my other favorite buildings in Buffalo. With that being said, any parking ticket I get, at least there is the silver lining of going into City Hall.

What structure is overlooked or underrated?
I find that the old Greyhound Bus Station on Main Street is often overlooked, as it’s dwarfed by the surrounding lavish buildings on Main Street. The quintessential Art Moderne style curves and finishes I just find absolutely delectable!

Any hidden talents?
It always surprises people when I say that I have experience in metalworking as a tinsmith and a blacksmith. As a blacksmith I got pretty good at kitchen and decorative pieces—sorry, no swords or axes—but switched over to tin because it’s not as dirty, nor as hot!

Introducing Benjamin Rosiek
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Benjamin Rosiek, PBN’s new Communications Coordinator.

Greyhound Bus Station on Main Street in Buffalo.
The Future of 72 Sycamore Street
continued from page 3

PBN is excited to begin this new chapter with significant support from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the New York State Council for the Arts, the Better Buffalo Fund, Erie County, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation, as well as historic tax credit support from M&T Bank. To date, we have raised over $1.3 million in support of our 72 Sycamore project.

But this funding will only get us so far. We need your help to make this project a reality! As we look to break ground, we still need to raise $200,000. Help us cross the finish line and rehabilitate our first building by donating in support of the project today at preservationbuffaloniagara.org/72-sycamore!

We look forward to sharing updates on this exciting project throughout 2023 on our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) as well as in the pages of this newsletter. To get the latest news on all things 72 Sycamore, visit preservationbuffaloniagara.org/72-sycamore.

Our New Strategic Plan
continued from front cover

2. PBN’s current board members, staff, funders, and partners are ready for the organization to make a proactive shift in its focus and priorities. PBN commits itself to getting the right people in the room and will devote a considerable amount of time and resources toward developing relationships and building out and diversifying its base of support, both financial and otherwise.

3. To be effective, attract funding, and sustain its work long-term, PBN will align its efforts around a prioritized set of strategic focus areas and a defined service area concentrated in Niagara and Erie Counties.

This plan does not change PBN’s mission or vision. Rather, it hones and sharpens our focus to better tackle the challenges facing our communities and enable our team to carry out our mission and vision more effectively.

We invite you to view our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan on our website at preservationbuffaloniagara.org/what-we-do. We will continue to communicate updates about our work via this newsletter, on our social media channels, and on our website. We invite you to follow along with us!

Capacity-building funding for this project was provided through PBN’s participation in the East Side Avenues program.
This past November, we were happy to once again host our annual meeting in-person and catch up face-to-face with our members! Here is a brief overview of all the incredible things PBN achieved in 2022.

We started the evening off with exciting news about our new future offices at 72 Sycamore Street! We have raised over $1.3 million dollars for everyone’s favorite “little brothel that could” and hope to start construction on that project in the next few months. See page 3 for the latest information on 72 Sycamore Street.

In the Sacred Spaces Assistance Program, this year saw an amazing uptick in applications. We have six currently active projects, and four more in the pipeline. Out of those 10 churches, we’ve submitted five determination of eligibility applications to the State Historic Preservation Offices, four of which were found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; we have three National Register nominations in progress; and have assisted two churches with local landmark applications, both of which were approved!

As far as the advocacy work that PBN has done in the community, we celebrated the saving of a four-unit property on Cottage Street in Buffalo. Through our preservation receivership program, the building has been lovingly repaired from its vacant state to once again provide housing for members of our community.

On Buffalo’s East Side, ground was broken for two major projects that save and engage historic structures. In both cases, PBN has been actively advocating for their reuse for years, including meeting with owners, community members, and other interested parties regularly. At 907 Michigan Avenue Roswell Park has started work on one of the few 1870s houses left on the block and will open a health center dedicated to the community in the Fruit Belt. Just a few blocks away at 204 High Street, Douglas Development is well on their way to reinvigorating apartments in a beautiful 1870s Italianate house.

Similarly, our East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund program has helped dozens of local property owners perform much-needed maintenance on their historic structures, thus preserving them for future use. This past autumn, we opened up a new round of funding which is already providing millions of dollars in support to East Side commercial districts.

In addition to those wins for our region, we are constantly campaigning for other buildings whose fate is still up in the air. Over the past year, places like the Great Northern Grain Elevator and the Cutting Family Cottage in Buffalo and the Native American Center for the Living Arts (aka the 2022: A YEAR IN REVIEW
Turtle) and 2018 Main Street in Niagara Falls have been put in danger. These are the projects that our members and volunteers help us fight for to help make a difference in our cities!

As part of our mission to support our communities, in 2022 we teamed up with the firm PlaceEconomics to conduct a study of the impact of preservation in Buffalo, and in September launched the resulting report, “Everyone’s Heritage.” This is eye-opening report shows how much of the city’s growth, economy, and social benefits are found within its historic districts! To read the report, visit pbnsaves.org/everyones-heritage.

Finally, at the meeting we also voted in and welcomed four new members to our Board of Directors: Brandi J. Barrett, RafiQ Flowers, Amity Lippes Mann, and Michael Quinniey for their first three-year term and reelected Katie Moriarty for her second three-year term. We are extremely grateful to have a board that is so passionate and energized about the work we do! 🙏

St. Adalbert Basilica Church.

Historic Barn Rehabilitation Tax Credit Webinar

February 8, 2023 | 6PM

Featuring Olivia Brazee of the New York State Historic Preservation Office

New members of our Board of Directors, top left to right: Brandi J. Barrett and Amity Lippes Mann, bottom left to right: RafiQ Flowers and Michael Quinniey.