

Northeast Office

Seven Faneuil Hall Marketplace
Boston, MA 02109
617/523-0885
617/523-1199 (fax)
nero@nthp.org (e-mail)
Serving: CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT

Wendy Nicholas, Regional Director
Alicia Leuba, Director of Programs
Roberta Lane,
Program Officer/Regional Attorney
Rebecca Williams,
Field Representative
Brent Leggs, Program Assistant

Northeast Field Office

6401 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19144
215/848-8033
215/848-5997 (fax)
nefo@nthp.org (e-mail)
Serving: DE, NJ, PA

Adrian Scott Fine, Director
Neeta McCulloch, Program Assistant

Shared Field Staff

CT Trust for Historic Preservation,
Nina Harkrader, Brad Schide
circuitrider@cttrust.org (e-mail)
860/463-0193

Preservation Trust of Vermont,
Ann Cousins, Doug Porter
ann@ptvermont.org (e-mail)
doug@ptvermont.org (e-mail)
802/658-6647

Northeast Advisors

CT: Preston Maynard, Anita Mielert
DE: Mary Jane Elliott, Joan Hazelton
ME: James Day, Ed Hobler
MA: Robert Kuehn, Marita Rivero
NH: Doris Burke, Martha Fuller Clark
NJ: Diane Allen, Ron Magill
NY: Richard Hawks, Anne Van Ingen
PA: Caroline Boyce, Augie Carlino
RI: Karen Jessup, Richard Youngken
VT: Elizabeth Humstone, Robert McBride

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Connecticut Trust for Historic
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Preservation MASS, Maine
Preservation, New Hampshire
Preservation Alliance, Preservation
New Jersey, Preservation League of
New York, Preservation Pennsylvania,
Preserve Rhode Island, Preservation
Trust of Vermont

Statewide Main Street Programs

CT: Connecticut Main Street Center
DE: Delaware Main Street Program
MA (Boston): Boston Main Streets
ME: Maine Downtown Center
NH: New Hampshire Main Street
Center
NJ: Main Street New Jersey
PA: Office of Community Development,
Pennsylvania Downtown Center
VT: Vermont Downtown Program

www.nationaltrust.org

Federal Court Rules on Merritt Parkway Project

We are pleased to report that U.S. District Judge Mark R. Kravitz has ruled in favor of the Merritt Parkway Conservancy, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, and a number of other organizations, in a case challenging the expansion of a double interchange on the Merritt Parkway at Route 7 and Main Avenue in Norwalk. (See the cover story of the [July 2005 Northeast Preservation News](#).)

The court ruled that the Federal Highway Administration and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDoT) failed to show that the interchange project included “all possible planning to minimize harm” to the historic Merritt Parkway, as required under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. As a result, the court ordered the project remanded to the federal and state transportation agencies to cure the legal “defects” identified by the court.

Winding through 37.5 scenic miles, the Merritt Parkway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is designated a National Scenic Byway and a State Scenic Road. Built between 1938 and 1940, the Parkway was originally graced with 69 ornamental bridges and more than 70,000 ornamental trees and shrubs.

The proposed interchange would include 21,300 feet of new ramps, 2,359 feet of new roadway, and several elevated flyway ramps. It would destroy four historic bridges and nearly a mile of mature landscaping along the Parkway, in order to construct massive new elevated ramps that are inconsistent with the scale and historic character of the Merritt Parkway. The interchange design was originally created when plans were underway for a new “Super 7” freeway extension to the north. That project was later cancelled, but the new interchange remained super-sized despite the now defunct freeway project.

Working in partnership with the Trust's Law Department and many local organizations, the Northeast Office first tried to craft a compromise with ConnDoT to avoid litigation. Upon failing that, there was no choice but to pursue the legal opportunities presented by the flawed process in this case.

The National Trust and the Connecticut Trust view this court ruling as an opportunity for federal and state transportation leaders to move forward and work together with the public to make the interchange project one that demon-



A view along the Merritt Parkway. photo: Tod Bryant

strates that safety, efficiency, history and landscape can work in harmony.

“We brought this lawsuit both because we care deeply about protecting the historic character of the Merritt Parkway and because we believe that the values of preserving this magnificent roadway are fully reconcilable with the needs of a 21st-century transportation system,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “In the past, ConnDoT has demonstrated commendable leadership in managing the Merritt Parkway as a modern transportation facility without destroying the qualities that make it a national treasure. The court's ruling provides an opportunity for ConnDoT to show the same kind of leadership in re-thinking the interchange project.”

“The National Trust and our local and state partners stand ready to roll up our sleeves and sit down with the transportation agencies to make this project a model, which can demonstrate that sensitive design and safety are compatible, not mutually exclusive,” said Elizabeth Merritt, Deputy General Counsel for the National Trust. “We hope this court decision will lead to a constructive dialogue about how to minimize harm to the Merritt Parkway that engages the public and state historic preservation officials.”

“This decision presents preservationists and transportation officials with a wonderful opportunity to work together as we have in the past to protect and preserve the historic integrity of the Merritt Parkway while improving it for a new century,” said Helen Higgins, Executive Director of the Connecticut Trust. “We are convinced that the Route 7 Interchange project can move forward in good time, with only a few modifications to better respect the Parkway's historic bridges and landscape.”

Dates, Deadlines and Announcements

May 12—“**Heritage Tourism: Connecting People and Places**,” at Rutgers University, Camden Campus. Explore ways that heritage can build community and create economic development. Public education and awareness created through heritage tourism, support the preservation of historic sites by garnering financial support. For more, visit www.nj.gov/dep/hpo.

May 12—**Grow Smart Rhode Island** presents the “**Power of Place Summit**” intended to help the implementation of the state’s soon-to-be-adopted land use plan, *Land Use 2025*, which reaffirms a vision for protecting Rhode Island’s distinguishing urban-rural balance with preferred development patterns based on compact, mixed-use centers set off by greenspace and the Narragansett Bay. For more information, please visit www.growsmartri.com.

May 15—**Preservation Delaware** holds its Eighth Preservation Conference, “**The Value of Preservation: For Passion & Profit**” in Dover. Featured speakers include Donovan Rypkema, Governor Ruth Ann Minner, and National Trust Executive Vice President David Brown. For more visit www.preservationde.org.

May 17-18—**Byways to the Past VII**, a conference on historic preservation and transportation projects, at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania in Indiana, PA. The conference features sessions highlighting transportation-related preservation projects and speakers from both the historic preservation and transportation communities. For more: www.pennbyways.net.

May 18-19—The **2006 Pennsylvania Heritage Partnerships Conference “Spreading the Word, Bridging the Gap,”** in Franklin, PA, makes the case for heritage and historic preservation as key to building a better future for all Pennsylvanians. Discussion includes why heritage matters, why preservation makes economic sense, what programs and best practices are available to help local efforts, and what can be done to promote heritage within your community. For more information, visit www.preservationpa.org.

May 22—The **Young Preservationists of Pittsburgh** presents “**Prescription Preservation: The Cure for Ailing Communities**” in Pittsburgh, featuring a keynote

address by the Director of the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Healthy Environments and Communities. For information, visit www.youngpreservationists.org.

June 1—Deadline for two **New Jersey Historic Trust** grants: **Historic Site Management Grants**, ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and promoting effective management at historic sites, and **Capital Preservation Grants**, ranging from \$5,000 to \$750,000 for construction expenses related to the preservation of historic properties. For more, visit www.njht.org.

June 4-7—**Pennsylvania Downtown Center** presents its 2006 Annual Conference, “**The ABC’s of the X, Y, and Z’s: Downtowns & Younger Markets**,” in Erie, PA. Educational sessions will give you the chance to learn and interact with informed, experienced professionals, including Main Street directors and nationally recognized experts in a variety of fields. For more: www.padowntown.org.

June 4-7—The **2006 National Main Streets Conference, “Heritage Resources,”** in New Orleans, LA. The premier conference for commercial district revitalization offers educational sessions on current revitalization practices, an opportunity to share experiences with peers and learn from them, access to experts through panels and workshops, and more. For more: <http://conference.mainstreet.org>.

June 9—The **Preservation Trust of Vermont** presents the 2006 Annual Historic Preservation Conference, “**Heritage So Rich, 1966-2006: Celebrating 40 Years of Preservation**,” in St. Albans. This celebration of the 40th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) features keynote speaker Philip Hoff, former Vermont governor and one of six members of the Special Committee on Historic Preservation whose work fostered the creation of the NHPA. For more information, visit www.ptvermont.org.

August 3-5—The **African American Preservation Alliance** presents the **National African American Historic Preservation Conference, “Keeping Your Eyes on the Prize,”** in Memphis, TN. For more information, contact Nancy Jane Baker: nancyjane.baker@memphistn.gov or (901) 576-7170.

National Trust Invests in Two Northeast Projects

The **National Trust Community Investment Fund II** has announced its investment in two historic rehabilitation projects: Harmony Mills, Mill Number 3—Central Tower and South Wing, pictured below, in Cohoes, NY, and the former Citytrust complex in Bridgeport, CT.

Harmony Mills, which was built between 1866 and 1872, is a National Historic Landmark that includes four main mill buildings and several ancillary structures. Mill Number 3 is the largest and most famous properties. Until recently, it was occupied by light manufacturing, warehouse and commercial tenants. The current developers acquired the property in 2000 and are in the process of rehabilitating the Central Tower and South Wing into 96 upper-floor apartments, while the basement and ground floor will be indoor parking.

The Art Deco former Citytrust complex includes four structures built between 1917 and 1930. By 1970 all of the properties were being used by the Bridgeport Citytrust Company, a local bank. The complex sat vacant from 1991 to 2005, when it was acquired for redevelopment. The buildings and an adjacent parking garage will be converted into 118 market-rate apartments, a 256-car garage, nearly 25,000 square feet of retail space, and more than 16,000 square feet of office space.



Join the National Trust and Keep Up with News of the Northeast

To learn about the latest developments in preservation and how you can become a member of the National Trust, send an e-mail to nero@nthp.org to join our mailing list or to request membership information, or please visit the National Trust’s Web site, www.nationaltrust.org.