

PRESS RELEASE

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State and Local Leaders, Building and Construction Professionals Support Voting “Yes” on Public Question #1 to Continue Historic Preservation, Investment in New Jersey

NEWARK – Today, state leaders, numerous heritage preservation organizations and building trade professionals gathered on the steps of the Essex County Courthouse to urge residents of Newark and Essex County to vote Yes on Public Question #1 on November 3rd. Voting Yes on November 3rd will continue New Jersey’s commitment to the New Jersey Historic Trust, which contributed significant grant funding to the major rehabilitation of the historic courthouse and many other historic sites in Newark and across the state. Today, the beautifully restored courthouse is a signature of Newark’s revitalization progress, and an example of the wise and sustainable investments that New Jersey must continue to make to enhance the quality of life of our citizens and protect our heritage while creating skilled jobs and stimulating the state’s economy.

The NJ Historic Trust is essentially out of funds for new investments, and can be renewed only by voters on November 3rd. Approval of the ballot question would continue three vital New Jersey programs for two years, the NJ Historic Trust, the Farmland Preservation Program and Green Acres, with a \$400 million investment from the state. “Over the last several years, we have partnered with the NJ Historic Trust and Green Acres programs to restore historic features, beautify our parks and modernize athletic fields,” said **Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo**. “These improvements have transformed our facilities and enhanced our residents’ quality of life. The NJ Historic Trust and Green Acres programs are valuable tools, but they need your support to keep them alive and continue their mission. I urge voters to cast their ballots in favor of Public Question #1 on November 3rd.” **Tom Gilbert, Chairman of the NJ Keep It Green Campaign** echoed DiVincenzo, “Public Question #1 is a smart investment to protect our land, water and history for our children and grandchildren. Restoring historic treasures will also create jobs and help revitalize struggling urban communities.”

Deborah Marquis Kelly, Chair of the Trustees of the NJ Historic Trust, spoke about the increasing needs of historic landmarks across the state and described projects requesting more than \$23 million in the latest Historic Trust grant round – many of which were shovel ready – that were rejected for lack of current funds. “As we know from our own houses, when buildings are in need of restoration, they cannot fix themselves.... If buildings have to wait for funding, once it starts to happen, deterioration escalates at a much faster rate, it becomes much more expensive and costs increase.... Passing the Nov. 3 referendum is critical to keep money reaching the sites in need.”

When Public Question #1 passes on Nov. 3, two more years, or \$12 million, of funding for historic preservation will be leveraged with private, municipal and county matching funds to complete many more critically needed community revitalization and heritage preservation projects.

In the past 20 years, the New Jersey Historic Trust has awarded more than \$123 million in

matching grants for preservation planning and “bricks and mortar” capital preservation projects to 532 worthy historic sites throughout the State. Essex County is one of the most prolific recipients of Trust grants. It ranks second among all counties in the amount of resources granted, including projects at Branch Brook Park, the Essex County Courthouse, Newark City Hall, Glen Ridge Municipal Building, the NJ Historical Society at the historic Essex Club, Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey at the Feigenspan Mansion and several buildings at the Newark Museum, including the Ballantine House, the Polhemus House and the creation of a fire museum in the carriage building.

New Jersey **Sen. Teresa Ruiz** commented “For generations, the State-sponsored Garden State Preservation Trust Fund has put New Jersey on the forefront of open space and historic preservation by providing counties and municipalities with resources to preserve and restore our historic treasures, protect green spaces and develop recreation opportunities. Voters can help continue this legacy by voting in favor of the public question on the November 3rd ballot and renew funding for the Garden State Preservation Trust.” NJ **Assemblywoman Grace Spencer** reflected on the value and beauty of the Essex Courthouse to the community and also called for a Yes vote on Public Question #1.

This public investment saves important buildings from destruction, preserves quality of life in communities, creates public awareness and creates a legacy for generations of New Jersey residents yet to come. Investing in historic preservation is a sustainable form of development that recycles building materials and helps save the environment, creates “green” construction jobs and helps develop tourism destinations that boost economic development. **Lawrence Plevy, CEO of Schtiller & Plevy Restoration Contractors and Board Member of Preservation New Jersey**, also speaking on the Courthouse steps, said “Since the NJ Historic Trust was established, at least 60% of our company’s sales have been on projects supported by matching grants from the Trust. And the economic impact is not just from the large projects that we’ve worked on like the Essex County Courthouse, but the smaller projects like community places of worship, town halls, libraries and museums.”

“Projects funded by the New Jersey Historic Trust provide skilled jobs for contractors, suppliers, architects, engineers, conservators, and craftsmen, which in turn supports the economy of the entire region,” added **Michael Mills, FAIA**, of Courthouse restoration architects **Farewell Mills Gatsch**. “The design team, my firm and its consultants had more than 50 people working on this Courthouse project at various times during its design and construction. NJ Historic Trust grants are responsible for a very large portion of the work that we do rehabilitating historic buildings and revitalizing communities in New Jersey.” **Sheet Metal Workers Local #25** executive **Marty Wymbbs** also spoke about the important job creation effects of Historic Trust grants, as well as the importance of preserving landmarks like the Courthouse for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

The marble and limestone Courthouse building was designed by Cass Gilbert, the architect of the Woolworth Building in New York City and the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, DC, among many distinguished landmarks. Well known **Newark historian Elizabeth DeTufo** described the national “City Beautiful” movement that resulted in the historic Essex Courthouse’s opening in 1907, when it won widespread acclaim for its neoclassical facades, grand rotunda and large-scale murals. Years of neglect caused the building and many of its unique features to deteriorate and fall into serious disrepair. In a \$49 million facelift, funded in part by NJ Historic Trust grants and completed in late 2004, the museum-quality murals, beautiful sculptures and soaring Tiffany skylights were rehabilitated, and the outstanding beauty of the entire building can once again be admired and appreciated by all its visitors. National awards for the rehabilitation and restoration

project, spearheaded by County Executive DiVincenzo, were received from a number of prestigious groups including the Victorian Society in America and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. DeITufo acknowledged DiVincenzo's critical role in moving the Courthouse restoration project forward.

As is the case with nearly all historic renovation projects, the Courthouse restoration required more skilled artisans and craftsmen to complete the work than would have been the case with an equivalent new building. **Mark Hall**, president of **Hall Construction**, the General Contractor for the Courthouse restoration who employed more than 125 workers on the restoration project, described the effects that the NJ Historic Trust preservation grants generate: "It means jobs for our tradesmen, it means preservation of our history, it means money earned and spent to boost the economy. It's a win-win answer." Support for the Yes on Public Question #1 ballot measure was also expressed from the **Building Contractors Association of New Jersey**.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Honor Award stated: "The Essex County Courthouse is more than a regional seat of justice; it is also a symbol of the aspirations of the people of Newark, of Essex County, and of the State of New Jersey. Its restoration is the most ambitious project of its type to be undertaken in Newark in recent memory, and required the coordination and cooperation of myriad skilled craftspeople. The work is a fitting complement to the other visible signs of the city's revitalization, which encompass sweeping changes in the cultural, recreational, corporate, and residential sectors of Newark. The newly restored Courthouse, now truly accessible by all people, is an appropriate and substantial reminder of the city's most glorious past, and a hopeful symbol of its dynamic future."

Deborah Kelly from the **NJ Historic Trust** summed up the presentations on the Courthouse steps today: "Historic preservation is really about community involvement. Revitalization of a historic site and its surroundings rarely happens as a top down initiative, but rather blossoms in a collaborative environment. When the hard work of community groups and non-profit organizations merge with the commitment of an insightful government, great things happen.

"A "Yes" vote on Nov. 3 will mean communities across the state can continue their collaborative efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and preserve the valued places that tell the stories of past generations for the benefit of future generations."

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Preservation New Jersey advocates for and promotes historic preservation as a sustainable strategy to protect and enhance the vitality and heritage of New Jersey's richly diverse communities. PNJ is the only statewide private membership-supported historic preservation organization in New Jersey. Visit www.preservationnj.org

The NJ Keep It Green Campaign is a coalition of over 135 organizations from across the state, including Preservation New Jersey, working to renew the Garden State Preservation Trust, and provide for clean water, open spaces, farmland preservation and historic preservation. For more information on this Campaign, please contact us directly or visit www.NJKeptGreen.org