

LANDMARKS OBSERVER

GREATER PORTLAND LANDMARKS, INC. WINTER 2012-2013, VOL. 37, NO. 3, FREE
our homes, our neighborhoods, our future

Save Our Place Places in Peril



Captions here...



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Dear Members and Friends:

BRUCE KATZ OF THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION was in Augusta October 23 for GrowSmart Maine's Summit to review progress made toward the recommendations of their groundbreaking study, *Charting Maine's Future*, published in 2006. The 2012 follow up report, *Making Headway*, evaluates each recommendation, cites specific examples, and notes lessons learned. "Remember what makes you special and capitalize on that," Katz said. "Focus on assets, not liabilities." He added that among the state's strongest assets are its historic cities and small towns and the natural landscape – an exceptional quality of place that sets Maine apart. See the report at www.growsmartmaine.org.

Four Landmarks board members, two advisory trustees, and I attended the gathering of more than 400 people, including preservation advocates, environmentalists, city and town planners, elected officials, educators, real estate developers, farmers, foresters, bureaucrats, and business owners. That interesting combination of attendees led to animated discussions and information sharing throughout the day. I had the good fortune to reconnect with many of my fellow participants in the Quality of Place Council, a reminder of another of the state's great assets – people who really care about protecting and enhancing our distinctive sense of place.

"Communities need to get over the fear of historic preservation," said Greg Paxton of Maine Preservation. "It has helped more cities renew themselves." Reports from three grassroots preservationists showed tremendous creativity in preserving historic resources. Tobias Parkhurst of Augusta couldn't find an apartment, so he bought an old building, fixed it up, and recruited a restaurant as a first-floor tenant. Hugh French joined fellow citizens in a sustained public and private effort to revitalize 20 historic buildings in downtown Eastport by packaging projects in imaginative ways. Jonathan Arnold of Kansas City, a developer trained as an architect, learned from a friend about a vacant mill in Dover-Foxcroft, took a look, and was hooked. He is now implementing the town's vision for a mixed use development that combines housing, a small hotel, and retail and community gathering space.

We were pleased to hear that historic preservation, notably Maine's historic preservation tax credit, is a great success story. The report states: "From 2008-2012, 55 privately developed historic preservation projects invested \$200 million during the heart of the real estate downturn." Yet, there is still more to be done to survey, invest in, and preserve the historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes that are such important community assets.

At the end of the day, we saw four powerful filmed testimonials, once again emphasizing the people whose vision and action make this state a better place. Portland's John Coleman, CEO of the Via Agency, reflected on his company's move to the former Baxter Library of 1888 on Congress Street. There, historic preservation, contemporary interior design, and whimsical art join forces to inspire creativity – a fine example of Bruce Katz's challenge to make the most of what makes Maine unique. ■

– HILARY BASSETT *Executive Director*



PRESERVATION UPDATES

Maine Jewish Museum Receives Landmarks Award

At its Annual Meeting, Greater Portland Landmarks presented a Preservation Honor Award to the Maine Jewish Museum for the preservation and revitalization of the former Etz Chaim Synagogue (1921) as a museum to celebrate Jewish life and culture in Maine. The building is a fine example of a turn-of-the-century immigrant-era house of worship, with a beautiful carved mahogany Holy Ark, recently-restored stained-glass windows, original light fixtures, and a newly re-opened third floor women's and children's balcony.



Landmarks recognized the dedicated volunteers who founded the Tree of Life Foundation in 2008 for their exciting vision and dynamic leadership in creating the Museum, which broadens public understanding of Maine's Jewish history, art, and culture, and brings new vitality to Portland's historic India Street neighborhood.

City to Undertake India Street Master Plan

The Portland Planning Department will undertake a master planning effort for the India Street neighborhood that will include additional research on historic properties that could be part of a potential historic district.

The site of Portland's first settlement, India Street is also important as a City gateway, especially for cruise ships. In 2002 Landmarks conducted a preliminary survey of the area. More recently, members of the India Street Neighborhood Association have been advocating for the master plan, as India Street undergoes rapid transformation with three major housing and mixed-use developments underway or starting soon. Four of the seven Places in Peril announced by Greater Portland Landmarks are in or adjacent to the neighborhood. The planning process will coordinate with a study guiding the future redevelopment of the Franklin Arterial.



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Greater Portland Landmarks promotes preservation and revitalization of historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes and encourages high-quality new architecture to enhance the livability and economic vitality of Portland and surrounding communities.

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Greater Portland Landmarks is supported by a generous Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

SAVE OUR PLACES: PLACES IN PERIL

THE FABRIC OF A CITY gives its visitors a strong impression and its residents daily joys. It is what makes us feel that we are in a special place, and nowhere else. But this fabric is made of individual buildings and landscapes, and neglecting any one of them can begin to tear apart the built environment that we have come to value. With the input of city officials, architects, developers, civic leaders, preservationists, and others, Greater Portland Landmarks has identified seven buildings in the greater Portland area as “Places in Peril” that are at a critical tipping point.

“These properties face serious threats. These threats include things like sale or transfer without any historic preservation protections, neglect or lack of maintenance, or lack of funding. In every case, the properties we’ve identified are prominently visible or have such historic significance that we must advocate for their protection and preservation,” said Hilary Bassett, Greater Portland Landmarks’ executive director. “These properties help define greater Portland.”

Landmarks’ goals in announcing the Places in Peril include: (a) building community awareness about the significance of these properties; (b) advocating for their preservation, protection and, in some cases, adaptive re-use so that they can continue to play a vital role in our communities; and (c) providing advice and convening people and resources to preserve, protect and rehabilitate the properties.

There are also important economic and environmental reasons to save these places. An economic impact report released in 2011 by Maine Preservation found that historic rehabilitation projects stimulate millions of dollars in investment and enterprise. Further, these projects encourage investments by neighboring property owners and businesses, create jobs, boost local government revenues, and improve the community’s brand. For such reasons, the 2011 Maine legislature extended the state’s historic preservation tax credit for an additional 10 years with unanimous bipartisan support.

“I have been in the real estate business for 28 years as a property manager, broker, and developer,” says David Robinson, a Greater Portland Landmarks trustee. “I have seen firsthand the economic importance of historic preservation.” Part of that importance is attracting residents to the community who love its authentic sense of place.

“I think everyone wants to live in Portland because of the human scale of the buildings and their beauty,” says Victoria Bonebakker, former chair of Landmarks’ board, who moved to Portland from California.

Also, there is increasing evidence that the greenest building is the one that is already built. A study this year from the National Trust’s Preservation Green Lab found that building reuse yields fewer negative environmental impacts than new construction, and that the majority of building types in different climates will take between 20 and 30 years to overcome the initial carbon impacts from new construction.

“It’s very important to get these Places in Peril in the public’s eye. I bet most people in Portland had no idea that House Island was the Ellis Island of the north, for example,” says Nate Stevens, Landmarks board member and a commercial real estate broker with the Boulos Company in Portland. “There is definitely a human interest in history and there is interest in owning an older building. And I think it’s very important that any potential buyer is aware of the historic significance.”

Landmarks board member Claire Hammen adds, “Historic buildings tell stories about our city’s past, not just about old architecture, but stories of how people lived, worked, socialized, and worshiped. To save and utilize historic buildings is the best form of recycling and adds to the uniqueness of our architectural landscape.”



House Island (Fort 1808-1898; Houses 1907)

Casco Bay, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: Located at the entrance to Casco Bay, House Island once protected Portland; now we must save House Island. These 24 acres are home to Fort Scammell, garrisoned in the War of 1812 and upgraded for the Civil War, the only fort of that era designed with two staircases in the gallery. From 1907 to 1937, Fort Scammell served as “the Ellis Island of the north,” and the three houses on the island were erected in 1907 for quarantine/detention purposes. In 1954 Hilda Dudley bought the island and saved it from an owner who planned to demolish the fort. Since then, her family has owned, cared for, and provided public access to the structures and the land. **THREAT:** The island is for sale for \$4.85 million. Though the family hopes a new owner will maintain public access and be sensitive to its significance, the historic fort and cottages, and the island itself are without protection. **OPPORTUNITY:** House Island’s location, national and local significance, and natural and built environment make it a top priority to preserve and provide public access. A sensitive buyer, creative solutions for preservation and access, and landmark recognition could all play a role in its survival.

Grand Trunk Office Building (1903)

1 India Street, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: The only building that survives from the once-extensive Grand Trunk Railroad complex in Portland, this three-story neo-classical brick structure once served as offices for the railroad and for transatlantic steamship operators that used its wharves and sheds. Highly visible, it is in the Old Port Historic District at the foot of India Street, a city gateway that is enjoying a surge of commercial and residential rebirth. **THREAT:** Broken windows, rotting trim, and damaged masonry show how the neglect of this vacant building is causing deterioration, which could snowball if it is not addressed soon. Complicated ownership is hampering sale of the property.

OPPORTUNITY: Its location has favorable zoning, design and height allowances, and there is an oversized adjacent lot, providing many



opportunities for rehabilitation of the building independently or as a signature element of a creative mixed-use development. State and federal preservation tax incentives would enable investment.



Abyssinian Meeting House (1828) 73 Newbury Street, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: A stop on the Underground Railroad and the center of social and political life for Portland’s African-American community throughout the 19th century, the Abyssinian Meeting House is one of Portland’s most precious historic landmarks. It is the third oldest standing African-American meeting house in the country, designated a city landmark, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and recognized by the National Park Service’s National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. An active, committed group, the Committee to Restore the Abyssinian, has spearheaded a long and challenging restoration. **THREAT:** The restoration is expensive and still needs significant funds. Without more help, this quiet gem, a powerful resource for educational and community activities, could suffer an incomplete restoration, and have limited public access. **OPPORTUNITY:** Greater awareness of its importance and its needs will help the Abyssinian attract more funding from local and national sources, to realize the vision of an educational resource celebrating Portland’s African American history, and to develop a plan for future public access when the restoration is complete.

Eastern Cemetery (1668) Congress Street, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: Opened in 1668, the 6.8-acre Eastern Cemetery is Portland’s oldest public burial ground, where the remains of Portland’s early leaders and Revolutionary War and War of 1812 soldiers repose, including Captain Lemuel Moody who built the Portland Observatory. Owned by the City of Portland, the cemetery features gravestones with symbols and inscriptions that suggest changing attitudes toward death across three generations. **THREAT:** The cemetery was long neglected, suffering from vandalism and theft. **OPPORTUNITY:** Spirits Alive! at Eastern Cemetery, a friends group dedicated to its preservation and stewardship, has worked with the City to develop a master plan for the historic burial ground. The site and its group will benefit from more awareness and support from the public, volunteers to help with projects, and funds to implement the much-needed master plan.



PLACES IN PERIL *continued on page 4*

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PLACES IN PERIL *continued from page 3*



Former Marine National Guard Armory (1941)

South Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: A testament to the mobilization at South Portland in World War II, this striking military structure has Art Deco features like glass block windows, zig-zag decorations, sculptured eagles, and keystones carved with tanks, grenades, and bullets. It sits on a key intersection, a gateway to South Portland. **THREAT:** It has been eligible for the National Register of Historic Places since 2004, but has no protections. Owned by the City of South Portland, the building is not well-maintained and is deteriorating. **OPPORTUNITY:** Its prime location, with large, flexible interior space, would be suited for a variety of upgrades and uses - a perfect venue, perhaps, for the creative economy, as its current tenant is affiliated with the film industry. City leaders have expressed support for historic preservation initiatives, and this building could offer an outstanding opportunity to create a redevelopment plan that would benefit the city, create jobs, and showcase the area's history.

The Portland Company (1847-1940)

58 Fore Street, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: This seven-building complex on ten acres is a rare survivor of 19th-century waterfront industrial architecture. The Portland Company produced a variety of locomotives, sea-going vessels, and machinery for the paper and war industries, and for construction of the Panama Canal. **THREAT:** While it is close to historic downtown Portland and Commercial Street and has been deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, it doesn't enjoy that designation, isn't protected as a City landmark, and is not in a historic district. The owner has maintained this historic site well since 1982, but has put it on the market. **OPPORTUNITY:** The property is ripe for rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and even new construction, and any such changes could be done with sensitivity to its historic character. Historic preservation incentives, including federal and state historic preservation tax credits, could make this an outstanding redevelopment opportunity that could also honor Portland's sense of place.



Portland Masonic Temple (1911)

415 Congress Street, Portland

SIGNIFICANCE: One of the finest examples of Beaux Arts architecture in Maine, designed by leading Portland architect Fredrick A. Tompson, this six-story, 136,000-square foot, mixed-use building features beautiful details and distinctive interior spaces. For example, the ornate Corinthian Hall features an original H.A. Hall pipe organ, mosaic floors, original furniture, and 20-foot-tall stained glass windows. Located in the heart of the Arts District and Congress Street Historic District, it may be Maine's last unrestored and unmodified lodge building. It's listed in the National Register of Historic Places and a designated city landmark. **THREAT:** The building is suffering from physical deterioration that requires major funding. **OPPORTUNITY:** Earlier this year, the Masons established a nonprofit foundation to raise funds for improvements and upkeep. The property is used for office and meeting space and could be further adapted for much-needed public gathering and event space in Portland.



SUCCESS STORIES: Places of Prosperity

GREATER PORTLAND LANDMARKS HAS dozens of examples of once-endangered historic structures that have been restored to "places of prosperity" for the City, their owners, and the public. Three are pictured here.

The restoration of the **Chase Block (1853) at 217 Commercial Street** (right), for example, once a crumbling structure with a prominent "Keep Out!" sign, resulted in a pleasing historic structure that now houses modern offices and retail shops. Perhaps most telling: the sign on its restored facade now reads, "Welcome Cruise Ship Visitors!" Its valuation has risen profoundly since 2003, as has its property taxes. The revitalization of Commercial Street was a major success story in the 1990s, and



the street was declared a Great American Street by the American Planning Association in 2008. Pictured at left, Portland law firm Pierce Atwood's new corporate headquarters are housed in the once-neglected **Cumberland Cold Storage/Twitchell-**

Champlin Block (1884-1924) Merrill Wharf. The extensive renovation was made possible in part by tax increment financing granted by the City and by state and federal historic preservation tax credits. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The presence of a vital professional business is enlivening the neighborhood and attracting attention to the west end of Commercial Street. Finally, at **621 Congress Street, the Romanesque Revival style Francis Fassett-designed Baxter Library (1888)** pictured at left was recently a building without a purpose, after the Maine College of Art consolidated its facilities at the Porteous Building. VIA, a national advertising agency with Portland headquarters, restored it with state-of-the-art office amenities and specially-commissioned art, to the delight of the firm's founder, his employees, and his clients.



"It's such great fiscal policy to be investing in these properties," says John Coleman, VIA's founder. "Economically it made sense. We were able to take advantage of tax credits and the greater density of the city. You're getting a package that you can't get in a new building."



Norm Nelson and his wife, Sally, have lived in Portland for eight years. After living in many other places, they discovered in Portland a place that is highly suited to them and their interests. Norm serves on the Greater Portland Landmarks board and other boards in the area. We caught up with him in their Munjoy Hill home, a condominium in a 19th century building on the Promenade.

What brought you to Maine after living so long elsewhere?

We had a long search for where we'd like to retire. Portland wasn't on our list at first, but friends of ours here kept telling us to take a look. Before, we led the corporate life, living mostly in suburbia. We retired, then traveled and lived in various places looking for the best spot. When we found Portland, it was a combination of things. We were looking for a small city, and we have friends up here and in Bath and Brunswick. We visited and everything started to click.

What is it about the city that is so compelling?

We considered New York City, Boston and Cambridge, and Seattle and quickly found Portland to be a very friendly, manageable and attractive small city. There is a sense of place here that appealed to us immediately. There's about one of everything we would wish for -- the symphony, an active arts scene and it's on the water.

What are some of your favorite things here?

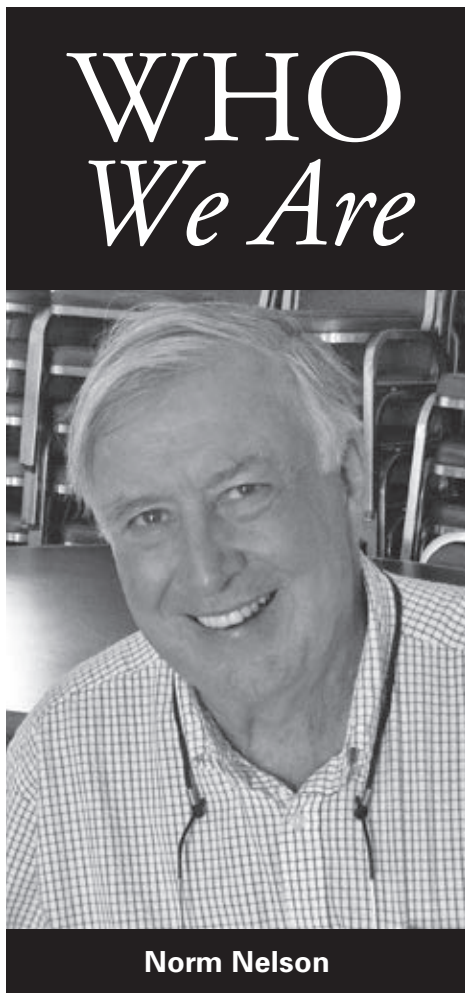
We have our circuit, Micucci's, Harbor Fish Market, Standard Bakery. Here on the Hill, Rosemont and Hilltop Coffee. One of the strong attractions for us is Portland's location. You can be in the countryside in minutes. Portland doesn't have the frantic life of other cities.

How did you get involved with Greater Portland Landmarks?

We went to an annual meeting and heard Hilary describe what Landmarks is all about. That's how it started. Not long after, as we continued learning more about the city, we became more interested. We were much taken by the advocacy efforts of Landmarks in supporting Portland as a remarkable place to live.

What do you think is Greater Portland Landmarks' strength?

My experience on the board has been that we're not about preservation only. Landmarks is also about making Portland such a livable city. New architecture can be welcomed because in 50 years it can be historic. I am impressed with Landmarks because, while holding on to the important historic elements of the city, we are dedicated to preserving landscapes as well as a historic and important buildings. Landmarks is not an obstruc-



Norm Nelson

tionist organization by any stretch. In fact, we are supportive of those who want to make changes as long as they are compatible with the city's fabric. The city's historic districts have helped maintain its character, and Landmarks assists owners seeking to comply with the regulations that may be required. Owners can look to Landmarks for real help in the preservation of a building for its rehabilitation and maintenance.

Landmarks is also a steward of the city-owned Observatory, a symbol of the city. This important icon is open to the public and supported by a staff of dedicated Landmarks docents. This season we will have had more than 10,000 visitors, a new record.

What do you think Landmarks' role is in Portland's future?

We have a very active, hardworking board. I am pleased to see Landmarks' work as we near our 50th year becoming more important to the city. The reality is that

we can't remain static as a city. We all want to ensure that we keep the sense of place and remain one of the more exciting and livable small cities in the country.

Places in Peril is a good example of Landmarks' recent efforts. Input was solicited from individuals and organizations across greater Portland. Of some 26 properties considered, seven were selected as needing attention and support. This process has been effective in other cities and is a marvelous way to have everyone focus on properties that we should all be concerned about. We're alerting the city to these gems.

In my view, Portland is entering a new and dynamic phase as the city becomes more popular. As Portland becomes well known, we must work hard to sustain the sense of place and the livability of the city. We're on everyone's radar and we need to be able to hold on to what we have, manage inevitable change, and retain the quality of life that this vibrant and historic city offers. It seems to me that Landmarks' and its membership's role in the next years will be to keep all of this in balance.

Are you here to stay?

My wife and I feel very strongly about this city and we've only been here eight years. We actually feel like we've lived here a long time. It's the best move we ever made. ■

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Greater Portland Landmarks' Historic Marker Program Honors Preservation Efforts

Greater Portland Landmarks was founded in 1964 with the express purpose of saving greater Portland's architectural heritage from neglect and thoughtless destruction.

THE HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Landmarks' Historic Marker Program offers a way to recognize the area's great wealth of historically and architecturally significant structures. The Marker Program identifies buildings of architectural and historical merit and honors a building owner's efforts in restoring and maintaining a structure's exterior in ways that are historically sensitive.

MARKER CRITERIA

Markers identify buildings whose exteriors retain their character-defining features and have not been significantly changed by incompatible additions and alterations. Properties may be located anywhere in greater Portland, but a building must meet the following criteria:

- it must be at least 50 years old and in good repair;
- the homeowner must be able to document the building's date of construction and the name of the original owner;
- the physical condition of the building's exterior must display the original architectural intent; that is, alterations to the house should not have damaged the original essential form and integrity of the architecture;
- the building's exterior rehabilitation work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

THE MARKER APPLICATION PROCESS

The marker application requires owners to research the building's history and its architectural description. Owners are encouraged to consult Landmarks' publication *Researching the Old House*, which outlines how to do the research required to complete a marker application. Landmarks' Preservation Services Advisor reviews applications to determine eligibility and will contact the owner when a decision has been reached. The marker review process may take several weeks to complete.



Caption 

MARKER FEES IN 2012-13

An application fee of \$25 (\$50 non-member) accompanies the marker application. The marker fee of \$50 is due before the marker order is placed and includes an individual membership. The basic marker is on a clear Plexiglas panel: there is an additional fee for a white background.

INSTALLING THE MARKER

The Preservation Services Advisor will recommend where the marker should be located; for instance, on a brick building, the marker is best installed with screws into the mortar joints. It is the responsibility of the property owner to mount the marker on the building. Most hardware stores will drill holes for mounting the marker at no or a small cost.

MAINTAINING A MARKER AND THE MARKER PROPERTY

Owners are responsible for maintaining their building and marker. From time to time, Landmarks may conduct an inventory of existing markers to determine if buildings continue to meet the Secretary of the Interior's criteria and if markers need to be replaced or rescinded. Owners may request replacement markers at any time at the same \$50 marker fee as a new marker. ■

If you have questions about the marker program, want to request an application form, or you need to replace a marker, please contact Sharon Colgan, scolgan@portlandlandmarks.org, 774-5561.

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Historic Preservation has Proven Success in ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PASSAGE OF THE TAX REFORM ACT OF 1976 was a watershed change that largely leveled the economic playing field for historic preservation nationwide, especially for the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of designated historic buildings. Since then, increased emphasis has been focused on the monetary benefits of building rehabilitation, for both communities and individual owners and investors. One indicator of the success of historic preservation ordinances and tax credits in stimulating new urban growth, *when preservation regulations and financial incentives are integrated together* within community planning and downtown revitalization strategies, is the comparative measurement of municipal property valuations before and after rehabilitation.

Greater Portland Landmarks has recently investigated the impact of these tools in preserving Portland's oldest historic commercial district, the Old Port (Waterfront) Historic District. This district was first designated as a National Register Historic District in 1974, and since enlarged. Federal tax incentives for rehabilitation properties listed in the National Register, known in the profession as certified historic structures, were first made available in this district in 1977.

The table presented below includes a sampling of both certified historic structures that were rehabilitated between 2001 and 2003 and new construction in the same district either on vacant infill sites or where non-contributing buildings were removed. This table illustrates two important trends: increase in valuations

RISE IN VALUATIONS OF OLD PORT NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT 2003 - 2012					
Building Name	Address	Pre-2003 Tax Assessor's Value Before Construction or Rehabilitation	2003 Tax Assessor's Value Upon Project Completion	April 2012 Tax Assessor's Value	2012 Property Taxes to the City of Portland
Hilton Garden Inn 2003	57 Commercial St	\$159,500	\$6,282,000	\$10,717,000	\$201,694
W.L. Blake Building (Mayhew Thomas Block) 1859/2001	73-93 Commercial St	\$842,320	\$3,560,760	\$5,907,729	\$111,081
Evie Cianchette Block 2000	145 Commercial St	\$1,155,300	\$3,408,903	\$6,091,400	\$114,640
William Moulton Block 1851	161 Commercial St	\$465,930	\$565,220	\$1,265,900	\$23,824
ShipWreck & Cargo 1951/2001	205-209 Commercial St	\$216,720	\$383,990	\$608,900	\$11,460
Ross & Lynch Block 1854	211 Commercial St	\$207,720	\$1,222,620	\$2,205,900	\$41,515
Chase Block 1853	217 Commercial St	\$308,340	\$1,585,920	\$2,637,500	\$49,638
Nathan Winslow Block 1852	225 Commercial St	\$414,000	\$1,126,550	\$2,043,400	\$38,457
Portland Packing Co. 1885	14-26 York St	\$256,725	\$1,605,960	\$2,248,600	\$42,319
Portland Pie Co.	51-53 York St	\$171,180	\$530,360	\$926,800	\$17,442

Sources: Assessor's Office, Sept. 2012 Online Database, City of Portland, ME; Portland Historic Preservation Program historic district files for the Old Port Historic District 2001 - 2003

of individual historic properties from degraded or tax credit-advantaged rehabilitation and the more subtle, positive influence exerted on investor confidence by these rehabilitations as demonstrated by new development on either adjacent lots or elsewhere in the historic district. Not surprisingly, as other economic studies around the nation have shown since 1990, historic district designation and the related ordinances (which govern site development visible from the public way, building envelope

alteration or new design, and signage), appear to have significantly contributed that every real estate developer, investor or property owner principally desires: greater predictability and a decrease in uncertainty. ■

If you would like to receive a sample Cyclical Maintenance Plan template for residential property applications, contact Christopher Closs at Greater Portland Landmarks (ccloss@portlandlandmarks.org) or (207) 774-5561 ext 102

Preserving Green

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larger holes, a combination of plywood, drywall and/or rigid foam insulation is typically an effective strategy. For leaks that occur around chimneys and furnace flues, sheet metal and high-temperature caulk are necessary. (See www.energystar.gov for this and more information.) While many air sealing projects are successfully

undertaken by homeowners themselves, hiring a qualified technician can improve the outcome.

In addition to air sealing, a home energy efficiency improvement plan should also include an evaluation of existing insulation and, most likely, adding insulation. It's important to air seal before insulating or adding insulation. The performance of insulation is greatly enhanced by proper air sealing. Insulation is not typically an air barrier and, thus, doesn't stop warm air from transferring

from a home's living space into unconditioned spaces like the attic. This greatly reduces the insulation's R-Value (its ability to resist heat flow) and can cause problems like mold, mildew, and rot as warm, moist air from the home infiltrates the insulation. This can lead to unpleasant and unhealthy indoor air quality. (For this and more information, see *Homeowner's Guide to Air Sealing* by Energy Circle and *Complete Home Evaluation Services*.)

Many homeowners express concern over sealing up

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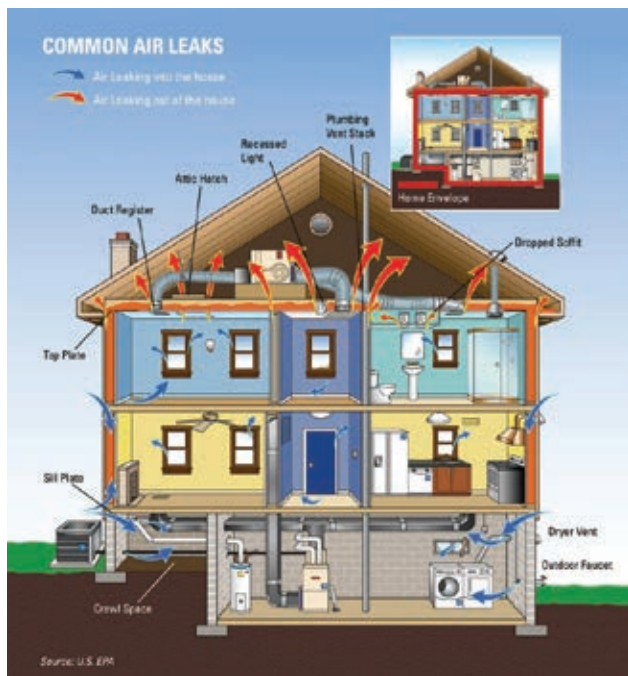
PRESERVING GREEN

Moving Beyond the “Drafty Old House”: Air Sealing Your Old Home

By **Katye T. Charette, LEED AP BD+C, Executive Director, U.S. Green Building Council, Maine Chapter**

AIR LEAKS, COMMON IN OLDER HOMES, contribute to a host of troubles. Among them, excessive heating and cooling costs, decreased durability, occupant discomfort, and indoor air quality issues. Sealing these leaks is a reliable way to ameliorate these problems.

Since air leakage occurs when outside air enters the home through uncontrolled and likely unknown open-



ings, the first step to combatting the problem is to identify the source of the leaks. The most effective diagnostic tool for locating air leaks is a blower door test. During a blower door test, the home is depressurized so that the amount of air leakage and location of specific leaks can be identified. Home energy professionals, like an energy auditor, routinely conduct blower door tests.

There are several notorious air sealing trouble spots of which to be aware. A visual/manual inspection of these trouble spots can help to identify leaks.

On the outside of your house, inspect all areas where two different building materials meet, including:

- all exterior corners
- outdoor water faucets
- where siding and chimneys meet
- areas where the foundation and the bottom of exterior brick or siding meet

Inside your home, inspect around the following areas for any cracks and gaps that could cause air leaks:

- electrical outlets
- switch plates
- door and window frames
- electrical and gas service entrances
- baseboards
- weather stripping around doors
- fireplace dampers
- attic hatches
- wall- or window-mounted air conditioners.
- cable TV and phone lines
- where dryer vents pass through walls
- vents and fans

Source: www.energy.gov

Once air leaks are identified, the task of air sealing begins. Different sizes and types of air leaks call for different sealing strategies and tools. For small leaks and leaks at doors and windows, customary air sealing tools include caulk, spray foam, and weather stripping. For

continued on page 7



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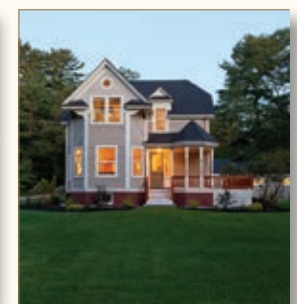
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