

APRIL 2024

COMMUNITY REPORT

GREATER PORTLAND LANDMARKS

A message from our president

On behalf of Greater Portland Landmarks, I am pleased to share this special community report with you.

Greater Portland Landmarks remains a vital organization that continues to make important and lasting contributions to the economic, cultural, and social vibrancy our region through advocacy, education and research.

We are financially strong, ensuring that we have the resources to play an important role in both preserving our past and helping to guide the future of Greater Portland's culture, communities, and built environment.

We have an experienced and committed board of trustees and staff. Over the past year we have been pleased to welcome three new trustees: Rob Richardson, Linda Whitten, and Bill Williams.

On behalf of the board, I also want to take this opportunity to thank Laird Yock for his guidance and support as our interim executive director over much of the past year. Laird is a highly respected individual within the world of philanthropy who stepped up to help us at a critical time.

And, as you will see in the following story, an extensive national search that started last fall has led us to a highly qualified new executive director who we will welcome this summer.

We continued to work on a strategic plan and vision that will guide us in the years ahead. The world of historic preservation is evolving in many

positive ways, and we want to be on the leading edge of these changes, tackling issues like climate change and confronting our past with honesty and inclusion.

2024 marks the 60th anniversary our founding in the wake of the devastating destruction of Union Station. We plan to mark this milestone with special events later this year. More to come.

As our organization moves into its seventh decade, there is still much important work to be done. Greater Portland Landmarks remains fully committed to honoring the legacy of those that built and sustained this organization over the years, and we look forward to enhancing our mission in new and exciting ways as we embrace the future.

None of this would be possible without your continued support and engagement, for which we are most grateful.



Bruce Roullard
President, Board of Trustees

Greater Portland
Landmarks



Historic character enriches our lives

Meet our new executive director

Following a nationwide search led by Starboard Leadership Consulting that attracted many well qualified candidates, we are excited to announce that we have found a highly skilled and experienced new executive director for Greater Portland Landmarks.

Kate Lemos McHale, who grew up in mid-coast Maine and is familiar with Greater Portland Landmarks and our work, has been offered and accepted the position. She will be joining us on July 1.



Kate has been active in historic preservation in New York City for more than 20 years. For the past seven years she has been the director of research at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), where she manages a staff of 12 and the survey, research, evaluation, and designation of landmarks and historic districts. She also oversees data management and GIS mapping and creates interactive educational and promotional tools that highlight and make more accessible diverse histories and cultural significance represented by designated buildings and historic districts.

Additionally, her current role involves guiding policy decisions, stakeholder outreach, and strategic planning. She has worked to ensure equity in historic designations and brings valuable experience in writing grant applications and managing grant-funded projects.

A passionate spokesperson and advocate for historic preservation, Kate has guided the designation of many landmarks and historic districts

through complex approvals, building broad support among property owners, community and preservation advocates and government officials.

Prior to joining LPC, she was a senior associate at Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, and a preservation consultant, where she brought a multidisciplinary approach to historic preservation, master planning, and new design in historic settings. She worked closely with architects, developers, contractors, and property owners and facilitated the public approvals process at the local, state, and federal levels.

“We are thrilled to welcome Kate as our next executive director,” says Bruce Roulland, president of the board of trustees. “We had some great candidates to choose from, but Kate stood out as a leader with the proven ability to establish and maintain strong relationships with a variety of stakeholders. With experience in both the private and public sectors, she clearly has the management, communications, fundraising, and hands-on technical expertise we were seeking.”

A formal public announcement of Kate’s hiring will be made in the coming weeks, but we wanted to share this exciting news with you now.

In addition to Laird Yock, we also want to express our appreciation to staff members Alessa Wylie, manager of education programs, and Jessie Brakenwagen, administrative coordinator, for holding everything together and managing multiple issues and projects while the executive director search was being conducted.

Thanks also to our board members, volunteers and supporters who stepped up to help us continue our important work over the past year. We look forward to welcoming Kate McHale home to Maine and to Greater Portland Landmarks this summer.

Greater Portland Landmarks welcomes three new trustees

We were pleased to welcome three new board members over the past year: Linda Whitten, Rob Richardson, and Bill Williams.



Ermelinda “Linda” Whitten of Gorham recently retired as the manager of human resources at AAA Northern New England, where she directed HR functions including employee relations, recruitment, compensation, employee benefits, and safety and wellness initiatives since 2010. She previously served as regional and divisional manager of human resources at Hannaford Bros. Co. for 25 years.



Rob Richardson, a resident of Portland’s West End, is an associate broker with Gardner Real Estate Group. After working in the risk management industry for a decade, he returned to real estate, his “true passion.” Rob and his husband have bought and sold several homes and rental properties over the past decade and currently run a rental business with short- and long-term units in Southern Maine.



Bill Williams is a retired physician who has resided in the Mountain View Park neighborhood of Cape Elizabeth for the past 41 years. He has served as a docent at the Portland Observatory, and his all-time favorite book is *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander and others, a best-selling book on architecture first published in 1977.

“We welcome these three great additions to our board of trustees,” says Vice President Carol DeTine. “They bring important experiences and skill sets to our work in support of historic preservation and stronger, resilient communities.”

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142 Free Street— Defending Portland’s Historic Preservation Ordinance

When the Portland Museum of Art requested that the City of Portland allow it to tear down the former Chamber of Commerce/Children’s Museum of Maine building at 142 Free Street as part of the museum’s planned expansion, Greater Portland Landmarks stepped up to defend Portland’s Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Under the criteria set out in the ordinance, 142 Free Street, constructed in 1830 and redesigned in 1926 by noted Portland architects John Calvin Stevens and John Howard Stevens, is designated a “contributing structure” within the Congress Street Historic District and as such cannot be demolished.

As our vice president Carol DeTine reminded members of the Portland Historic Preservation Board at a public hearing last fall, Greater Portland Landmarks was instrumental in advocating for Portland’s Historic Preservation Ordinance more than 30 years ago.

In her statement to the board, one of many in opposition to the reclassification request, Carol noted the ordinance “has served our city well, creating new historic districts, preserving countless historic buildings and neighborhoods, and spurring millions of dollars in investments that have helped to make Portland such an attractive place to live and visit.”

We have made it clear that we have nothing against the Portland Museum of Art and its desire to expand, but that this issue goes right at the integrity of the historic preservation ordinance.

The Portland Historic Preservation Board voted unanimously in November against re-classifying 142 Free Street and the Portland Planning Board followed suit with a similar recommendation in February. The issue will now go before the Portland City Council, which has the final say on the matter and is expected to make its decision this spring.



Greater Portland Landmarks leadership and supporters have been leading an all-out effort against changing the status of 142 Free Street. We are engaging with the news media to get out our message and are receiving legal guidance from a prominent Portland law firm. All of these efforts will continue until this issue is settled.

Trends report validates our work and mission

In September 2023, the City of Portland received a commissioned report from Jon Stover & Associates on the local impacts of historic districts: *Trends on Portland’s Historic Districts; An Assessment of the Relationship Between the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance and Neighborhood Demographics, the Built Environment and Sustainable Development Goals.*

At the outset, the report notes: “The historic nature of Portland’s buildings and neighborhoods is a defining characteristic of the City,” and that “Portland’s twelve historic districts contain — and help preserve — some the city’s most important cultural assets and structures...”

Among its key findings, the *Trends* report found that being in a historic district does not significantly increase comparable home prices or rents; that there is no evidence that historic district designation leads to displacement; and that historic districts have become more racially diverse since 1990, at a rate similar to Portland overall.

It determined that vacancy rates in historic districts are similar to the citywide average and that median gross rent rates have grown at a nearly identical rate as in other parts of the city.

And, as we grow increasingly concerned about climate change, the report found that the lower level of demolition in historic districts diverts

waste from landfills and that renovation lowers the use of carbon-intensive building materials, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions when compared to new construction.

We found the report extremely valuable in that it dispels some negative misperceptions about the historic districts and supports our work here at Greater Portland Landmarks, including our promotion of the renovation and re-use of historic structures as a way to help fight climate change.

The full report can be found at <https://portland.civilspace.io/en/projects/historic-preservation-impact-study>.

Experienced Advocacy Committee has a full plate

Advocacy has always been an important part of what we do at Greater Portland Landmarks — whether it's promoting sound public policy related to historic preservation or working to preserve historic buildings and neighborhoods.

With major issues like the fate of the former Chamber of Commerce building and RECODE, the first rewriting of the Portland's Land Use Code in over 50 years, we are lucky to have a strong and experienced Advocacy Committee leading the way on these and other important issues.

Sally Oldham and Carol DeTine are committee co-chairs. Sally has been involved with historic preservation for more than 40 years, nationally and here in Maine. She worked at the National Register of Historic Places in Washington D.C., and also served as vice president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Sally has served Landmarks as a trustee and board president and chaired the Advocacy Committee once before.

Carol DeTine, AIA, is a well known Portland architect and our current board vice president. She is leading our effort in opposition to reclassification of the Chamber building at 142 Free St.

Sally and Carol are assisted by Julie Larry, an architect and former GPL board president and director of advocacy. Other committee members include Deb Andrews, longtime Historic Preservation

Program manager for the City of Portland, Alex Jaegerman, former chief planner for the City of Portland, and former Portland Planning Board Chair Barbara Vestal. They are joined by other prominent members of the community, including Bill Hall, Nancy Montgomery, Jane Briggs, Candice Lee, Jack Vreeland, Chloe Martin and Jane Hurd.

The committee is also involved in supporting legislation related to tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic properties, reviewing projects that come before Portland's Historic Preservation and Planning boards, and supporting nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

"We are very fortunate to have such respected preservationists and community leaders on our Advocacy Committee at this important time," says Bruce Roullard, president of the board of trustees.

Thank you, Greater Portland Landmarks docents!



Greater Portland Landmarks' volunteer docents are the backbone of our organization. Without them we would not be able to offer guided tours or manage the Portland Observatory. They are a passionate group of people who appreciate local history and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others.

Our docents have a wide variety of interests and make each tour they lead a unique experience. We are so fortunate to have them. Here's what some of our visitors have had to say:

Really excellent guided tour with great stories of Portland history.

Our guide, Rick, was fantastic and so informative!

This tour was one of the highlights of our trip to Portland! The building and the history behind it are incredibly interesting, the tour guides are kind, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic, and the views from the top are stunning! Absolutely worth the visit and the tour!

Remembering Peter Carmichael



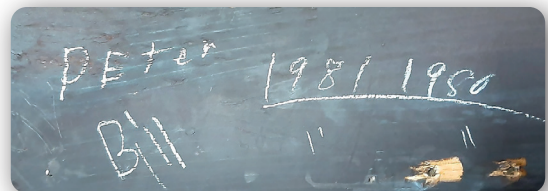
We were deeply saddened by the unexpected passing of docent Peter Carmichael. Peter became an Observatory docent in 2016 and a tour docent in 2018 when we introduced a Western Prom tour.

Peter grew up on Munjoy Hill and liked sharing his nautical knowledge with Observatory visitors — perhaps a little too much sometimes when his tours ran long, much to the delight of visitors

and the consternation of site managers.

He had a lifelong passion for Portland history and was able to share fascinating tidbits that enthralled visitors and fellow docents alike.

We will miss Peter but will think of him every time we see his name, written on the back of the stairs at the Observatory. He will always be a part of the building that he was so fond of.



Greater Portland Landmarks' mission is to ensure that Greater Portland preserves its sense of place for all and builds vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods and communities for the future.

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We welcome your support

Thanks to our many community partners and donors, Greater Portland Landmarks is in a strong financial position, but we continue to need funds to support our ongoing operations and advocacy work.

We have many ways to give and welcome your additional support. For more information please visit:

www.portlandlandmarks.org/support



2023 NUMBERS

Portland Observatory

10,158 Total visitors
42 Number of docents
1,078 Number of docent hours volunteered at the observatory

Walking Tours

38 Number of tours given
314 Number of people taking tours
96 Number of hours volunteered by for walking tours

Visit our new offices

After selling the Safford House in 2023, we moved to new offices in the Ocean Gate Plaza, 511 Congress St., Portland, right in the heart of the Congress Street Historic District.

We're in Suite 107 right off the main lobby. Please stop by and say hello.