



Township of South Orange Village

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
101 SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE
SOUTH ORANGE, NJ 07079

Gary Hill, Chairman
Bob Barnett, Vice Chairman

Catherine D. Cameron, Recording Secretary
Ph: 973-378-7715 Ext. 2
Fax: 973-763-6396
Email: ccameron@southorange.org

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Dear Village President Torpey and the Board of Trustees:

This letter is a follow-up to the statement we presented at the September 8, 2014 Board of Trustee meeting.

Its purpose is to emphasize and provide you with additional hard evidence of **the positive economic impact** and **significant monetary benefit** that investment in historic preservation has on communities in New Jersey and the nation as a whole. It will also address the impact historic preservation has on area residents, who cite historic buildings as their reason for moving here, and who "spread the word" about the value of moving to the community to potential new residents.

New Jersey-Specific Research Findings

The data included here have been gathered primarily from a research study specific to communities in New Jersey conducted by The Rutgers Center for Urban Policy Research. The findings of ***Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation***, (Lahr et al., 1997) provide a broad range of spending statistics, including:

- **\$123 million** in historic rehabilitation is effected annually in New Jersey.
- Of this, **\$84 million - more than half** - is involved in rehabilitating nonresidential historic properties [such as Village Hall]. (p 37)

The models used in the study identified and ranked the importance of economic indicators as:

- 1) Jobs created
- 2) Resident income generated, and
- 3) Resident wealth generated (gross domestic or state product)... (p 37)

As a result of this research, we are able to see that New Jersey's \$123 million annual investment in historic rehabilitation has a nationwide impact, creating approximately:

- **4,600** new jobs
- **\$156 million** in additional income, and
- Over **\$207 million** in total wealth

Importantly, findings reveal that **more than 50%** of each of these income and wealth measures accumulate right here in New Jersey. (p 37)

"Why we moved here - and you should, too"

For a primary source of the significant role historic preservation plays in why local area residents chose to move here -- and encourage others to do the same -- we need only look to comments from current local residents:

"I was attracted by the early twentieth century character of the houses in South Orange. Previously living in New York City, South Orange has a compelling beauty that's soothing on the soul. I feel by moving here I've inherited a past that's more than just owning a house."

- Lyman Dally

"We saw a picture of our house on the cover of a real estate magazine. It was advertised as a Stanford White Home ... who could pass up the opportunity to see a home that was possibly designed by a famous architect? What we found was a beautiful neighborhood, great housing stock, spacious properties, and best of all, welcoming neighbors."

- Amy Dahn

"Over time I really grew to appreciate and value of this community for its volume and range of historic and often unique homes and architecture. This is an absolute gem of a town based on history and architecture, and diversity of residents...I am a purist, adamant and committed to keeping it the same quality of construction, including the period look, workmanship, materials, etc. I love the 1930s and 1940s for that period's design and style, and more reductive and refined forms in architecture and I have committed to keeping this house true to that era."

- Greg Leshé

Additional Benefits of "Cultural and Heritage Tourism"

South Orange also stands to benefit from a **growing national interest in "Cultural and Heritage Tourism"** -- defined by the non-profit group "Partners in Tourism" as "travel to historic places and cultural and natural attractions that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." ¹

This Rutgers study also includes quantified measures of the **economic value** of Heritage Tourism:

- Heritage travelers spend more than other travelers – **17% to 61% more per trip**
- Spending by New Jersey Heritage travelers -- counting only that portion attributable to the "heritage" portion of their travels -- amounts to some **\$433 million annually.**
(p 59)

This increased spending should also be included when calculating plans to achieve important objectives such as:

- Offsetting the costs of maintaining historic sites
- Perpetuating the "sense of place" that lends communities their unique character and identity
- Realizing important economic gains in terms of jobs, income, and tax revenues. (p. 58)

We felt it extremely important that the Village President and Trustees have the benefit of these quantified numbers -- demonstrating the positive economic impact of rehabilitating South Orange Village Hall and maintaining its use as a fundamental part of the fabric of South Orange -- as you consider its future.

We look forward to the mutual sharing of further information between the Board and the Historic Preservation Commission, as agreed when we were last together, as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Gary Hill, Chairman,

On behalf of The Township of South Orange Village
Historic Preservation Commission