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July 11, 2007

Mr. Michael Stern
Chairman
City of Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh is deeply honored to support the nomination of August Wilson's birthplace & home to be a city of Pittsburgh historic landmark.

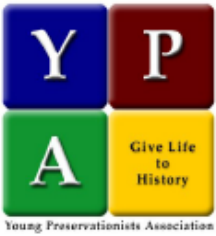
The Young Preservationists included August Wilson's house on our inaugural list of the "Top Ten Best Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area" in 2003. At the time, we saw the potential of this property to be an ideal candidate for preservation and reuse—not just as a museum or shrine to the great playwright (Wilson was still living at the time), but as a real working site for either housing or commercial space.

Shortly after Mr. Wilson died, I sent a letter to Paul Ellis, the property's owner, encouraging him to pursue historic designation to preserve the physical manifestation of Mr. Wilson's great literary accomplishments as well as a symbol for the interracial diversity of the Hill District. YPA is pleased that Mr. Ellis has chosen to support historic designation.

In 2004, YPA nominated the New Granada Theatre to become only the third city of Pittsburgh historic site related to African American history (the other two, the Centre Avenue Y, which I nominated in 1995, and the John Wesley AME Zion Church, are both in the Hill). Ironically, upon Mr. Wilson's death, numerous homemade messages honoring Mr. Wilson were taped to the New Granada, as if his soul had come to rest in the former theatre.

Well, it's inspiring to note that not only are steps being taken to restore the New Granada Theatre, the right motions are being taken to preserve the memory of August Wilson. A new state historical marker stands in front of the house now, placed there on May 30, 2007. And, YPA hopes that the Historic Review Commission, and by extension the City Council, will designate this important house as a protected city landmark. Mr. Wilson's spirit lives on in the plays he wrote and in sites that he and others inhabited.

As preservationists, we take great pride in advocating for preservation of the region's vast historical inventory. As Larry Glasco and I wrote in the *Post-Gazette* in February of this year, it is essential that we preserve some of the last vestiges of August Wilson's Hill District before they are gone forever.



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But the reality is always different. Economic circumstances usually dictate just how much we can actually save and reuse. For instance, it will take millions of dollars to bring the New Granada back to life.

On the other hand, isn't it amazing what actually does get preserved? If we can save Frederick Douglass's house in Washington, DC, then why not other national figures who lived right here in our own city, such as August Wilson, Robert L. Vann, and William A. "Woogie" Harris's house in Homewood (better known as the headquarters of the National Negro Opera Company).

Recognizing these landmarks and then taking steps to preserve them are the first steps. Since the publication of the *African American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County* in 1994, we have lost a lot of August Wilson's Hill District, and many other historic sites important to African Americans. I have made it a central theme in the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh's work to recognize and assist in the preservation of African American historic landmarks.

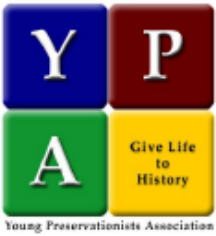
Last year, YPA released a report, "Unprotected Pittsburgh," that identified 130 historic sites in Pittsburgh that are not protected by the city's preservation ordinance. In terms of themes, African American historic sites represented the largest category, with 37. At the time, these included the August Wilson house.

It is good to note that steps have also been taken to honor this history, as well. There are a number of state historical markers placed in and around Pittsburgh recognizing the contributions of African Americans in the development and prominence of this region. A smaller number of sites have actually become historic landmarks. The next step is securing the necessary resources to see to it that these sites are preserved and reused. We must preserve these historic sites to continue the great legacy that African Americans worked so hard to create.

There is widespread popular support for preserving our region's African American history. During the re-dedication of the state historical marker at the National Negro Opera Company house in Homewood on May 3rd, nearly 75 people showed up from around the region to honor the past. Let's build on this momentum and use the preservation of these historic sites as catalysts for revitalization of the entire community.

Markers can be easily replaced, but structures cannot. The stories will remain as long as we decide to document and retell them. But without the physical structures for context, young people will find it hard to interpret the legacy so many African Americans worked hard to create.

In conclusion, as a perpetual student and researcher of the region's African American history and as the founding chairman of the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh, I can think of no greater honor to the next generation than to protect our most important historic sites. The August Wilson house deserves this honor.



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Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the historical nomination of the August Wilson house.

Sincerely,

Dan Holland
Founder and Chair
Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh