

# Preservationists Speak:

Results of the first online survey of  
public opinion toward historic preservation  
in southwestern Pennsylvania



*Give life to history.<sup>SM</sup>*

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Results of the first online survey of public opinion  
toward historic preservation in southwestern Pennsylvania**  
(Survey responses collected from November 19, 2003, through February 3, 2004)

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Carrie Furnaces in Rankin, 1989.

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YPA salutes the life of John Murdoch, a founding member of Preservation Pittsburgh, dedicated preservationist, and resident of Friendship who passed away in March 2005.

On the cover: Demolition of St. Joe's in Friendship.

YOUNG PRESERVATIONISTS ASSOCIATION<sup>SM</sup>

U.S. Application Serial No. 78/374,684

and

GIVE LIFE TO HISTORY<sup>SM</sup>

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Demolition of St. Joe's in Friendship, winter 2005.

# Introduction

**R**esearch helps individuals to make informed decisions and to reduce uncertainty. With this goal in mind, the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh (YPA) conducted an online survey to gauge popular opinion of historic preservation and to quantify what people in the region think about preservation. YPA believes this survey serves as a model for a wider analysis of public opinions of historic preservation. It is our hope that the survey results will guide our efforts so that we may better tailor our

activities to help communities preserve their historic resources. We also believe the results will allow us to continue to contribute to the regional dialogue on historic preservation.

The results of this survey indicate a strong belief among the majority of respondents that “preserving the history of Western Pennsylvania is important to the future of the region.” [p. 12.] This response indicates that the preservation ethic is strong in the Pittsburgh region. The preservation victories which have been achieved over the years have clearly resonated with people. Pittsburgh's historic neighborhoods are appreciated and supported by young people, who are more likely to live in historic areas than non-historic communities.

However, the survey results also indicate that we have some work to do. While there is general consensus that historic preservation is an important tool for community revitalization, there was not agreement on the solutions to urban decay and suburban sprawl. Furthermore, the survey results show that community and political leaders may be underestimating the value of historic preservation as a job-creating and tax base-enhancing tool.

This is where “social marketing” comes in. Social marketing, a concept sweeping across the non-profit field, is the planning and implementation of programs designed to bring about social change using concepts from commercial marketing. Since the ultimate objective of marketing is to influence action, we must craft our message properly to ensure effective action among preservationists.



Saving the Strand Theater in Zielenople:  
Preservation creates hope for the next generation.

The survey results suggest that it is our job to do a better job of telling our story. We should emphasize both the high-profile preservation successes—which include the adaptive reuse of the former Heinz Plant to loft housing, the vibrancy of the Cultural District, and the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative (a work in progress)—to the less-heralded victories, such as the region’s heritage museums, Main Streets such as Beaver, Indiana, Waynesburg, and Zielenople, and even new communities, such as the South Side Works, which is pedestrian-friendly and blends in with the historic fabric of Carson Street.

As the results of this survey suggest, most people with an interest in history or revitalizing communities can appreciate the work that we do. But are we losing people when we use terms like “sustainable development,” “transit-oriented development,” and “smart growth?” When most people see an image of a former historic building that has been demolished, it evokes an emotional response.



Pittsburgh's stroller-friendly Strip District:  
Preservationists help create healthy communities for all ages.

But how do we get people to act to prevent this type of debacle? Through the use of social marketing techniques, we should reconsider a change in our terminology to communicate our message more effectively to elected officials and other key decision makers.

For instance, aren't we all trying to create “stroller-friendly” communities: child-friendly places that encourage human interaction and are safe enough to walk down the sidewalk with a baby in a stroller? Doesn't this embody what we are trying to achieve—communities secure enough for children, yet vibrant enough for everyone?

We aren't just historic preservationists, we are *investors*, preserving the *assets* of our region that give us a *competitive advantage* in the global marketplace. Historic structures aren't just old buildings, they represent *stored value* waiting to be unlocked by investors, developers, and funders. Old buildings are *opportunities* to create *jobs, tax revenues, and attract young people*.

The Young Preservationists believe that this survey serves as a model for a wider analysis of public opinions of historic preservation. It is our hope that the survey results will guide our efforts so that we may better tailor our activities to help communities preserve their historic resources. We also believe the results will allow us to continue to contribute to the regional dialogue on historic preservation.

All too often, preservationists preach to the choir without hearing from the congregation. We don't often hear from those outside of our “club.” We need to understand what the general public thinks about history, what they think is good or bad about preserving our history, and what it means to our regional identity and our vitality. After all, we are trying to cast a wide net so that preservation is embraced by a larger number of people.

The Young Preservationists Association envisions a day when historic preservation in southwestern Pennsylvania has become as ubiquitous as the heritage of New England or Santa Fe.



# Executive Summary

Butler County Farm.

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh has released the first online survey of southwestern Pennsylvania's sentiments toward historic preservation that is being used to help guide and refine the efforts of future YPA initiatives. The non-scientific, self-selecting survey was conducted and collected responses from 133 individuals in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties as well as several responses from beyond southwestern Pennsylvania.

Sixteen questions were asked on issues pertaining to historic preservation in the Pittsburgh region and the respondents' demographics. In many instances, the respondents elaborated with specific examples. Although the survey size was relatively small, the survey represents an important sampling of the public's opinions and sets a precedent for future online surveys.



According to the survey, most people agree that "Preserving the history of Western Pennsylvania is important to the future of the region," such as the Greene County Courthouse.

The survey is purposely regional in its scope and includes only one question that is specific to the City of Pittsburgh. At its simplest, the survey's results suggest that historic preservation is considered an important issue throughout the region but may be underestimated by area political leaders. Among the most compelling results are the following:

- ◆ 95% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that "Preserving the history of Western Pennsylvania is important to the future of the region."
- ◆ Fewer than half of the respondents feel that "Community leaders in [their] neighborhood do a good job of protecting historic structures."
- ◆ 38% respondents were aware of "historic and/or architecturally significant building(s) torn down in [their] neighborhood within the past five years."
- ◆ The survey also touched on an issue that is significant to many of the surrounding counties and found that 81% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that "Historic rural areas in Western Pennsylvania are currently threatened by development pressures."
- ◆ 94% of the respondents feel that "regional planning agencies and elected officials should be given greater incentives to work within growth control guidelines, such as historic preservation ordinances."

This report provides an outline of the questions asked, the corresponding responses received including specific examples, GIS maps of the respondents' locations, and plans for future research.



Highland Park streetscape.

# Conclusions

From the data collected, three major conclusions emerge:

**1. Historic preservation is an issue of regional importance**

The survey results reveal that historic preservation is not limited to the City of Pittsburgh or any single municipality as an issue of concern; it is a matter that encompasses the entire region. The counties surrounding Allegheny County have real concerns about protecting their historic assets that may require new approaches to their issues. Preservation is a regional concern shared by many, regardless of where they are located, evidenced in the map on page 11.

In addition, respondents show a connection to and association with southwestern Pennsylvania, rather than with one community.

They highly value historic preservation as a tool for community revitalization. Survey responses indicate that historic preservation is a regional concern that requires cooperation, coordination, and leadership to secure victories.

**2. There is not clear agreement about the threats and solutions to preserving southwestern Pennsylvania's history**

Survey responses indicate that there are currently multiple threats to historic structures throughout western Pennsylvania with little consensus regarding which threat will be the greatest in the next five years. In addition, there is no clear consensus on what should be done to remedy the issues of abandoned and vacant properties. The responses did not indicate whether regional "growth" could be achieved through historic preservation.

**3. Political Leaders Underestimate the Importance of Preservation**

Respondents to the survey suggested that community leaders and government planning agencies throughout southwestern Pennsylvania may be underestimating their constituents' concerns for incorporating historic preservation into future development and growth control guidelines.

From these three conclusions, we can infer that, in a region faced with declining jobs, businesses, and population, preservation of historical resources often takes a back seat to economic development issues.



Survey respondents could not agree on solutions for places like New Kensington.

One implication for action could be that education of public officials and other leaders is required. Given the survey results, it appears that public officials see an inverse relationship between historic preservation and economic growth. Yet, preservation has been shown to be a reliable generator of jobs and taxes for many communities.

The Young Preservationists Association must show that the past is not a burden, it is our future. We can grow with our history. We need to demonstrate that historic preservation does work to restore vitality to many communities. But where public officials are concerned, we need to tell a better story.

We have had many success stories, including restored historic neighborhoods in the City of Pittsburgh, including the Cultural District, a number of local history museums, various national historic landmark sites, such as the Meason House in Fayette County and Old Economy in Beaver County, as well as a number of revitalized historic Main Streets throughout the region. But in some ways, these success stories are old news. We need to continue to secure victories and make headlines.

Our history defines us, and the opportunities to preserve our identity are all around. We are the "workshop of the world," a former industrial powerhouse that built the nation and the world. Preservation of the Carrie Furnaces in Rankin as an interpretive center, museum, or as the centerpiece to a recreational facility would highlight Pittsburgh's industrial past.

Pittsburgh was a center for African American history—from the Underground Railroad to the Negro baseball leagues, to the jazz era—and the city contains a number of historic sites in need of restoration that would tell a compelling story about the contributions of African Americans to the region and the nation.

The Pittsburgh region's place as the nation's premier transportation hub—from the National Road, which cuts through three southwestern Pennsylvania counties, the starting point for the river journey of the Lewis and Clark expedition, to the railroad era, and the nation's first transcontinental highway, the

Lincoln Highway—could be secured if we dedicate our resources toward preservation of the signs, buildings, and landscapes along these routes.

In addition, each site that YPA has highlighted in its "Top Ten Best Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area" report are potential victories.

These are just a few opportunities for growth, for jobs, for economic vitality that people in the Pittsburgh region value, as demonstrated by the survey results in this report.



Brownsville, Pa.:  
An untapped heritage opportunity.



# Summary of Responses

South Side Markethouse

## 1. Regional Importance of Preservation

Several questions touched directly on historic preservation as an issue that is important to Pittsburgh and the region. For instance, an almost unanimous response was received that historic preservation was an important issue for the future of the region, i.e. 95% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “Preserving the history of Western Pennsylvania is important to the future of the region.”

Yet, when asked if Pittsburgh has been successful in efforts to protect its historic structures, a sharply divided opinion was received. Nearly half (47.5%) of the respondents agreed, and 3% strongly agreed, that “Pittsburgh has done a good job protecting its historic structures,” while 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed on the same question, and 16.5% had no opinion. There was less division concerning the issue of historic preservation in rural areas, i.e. 44% of respondents strongly agreed, and 37% agreed, that “Historic rural areas in Western Pennsylvania are currently threatened by development pressures.” Only 3% of the respondents disagreed that historic rural areas are threatened and 16% had no opinion.

## 2. Numerous Threats and Approaches to Historic Preservation Issues

In regard to the second broad trend that there are many threats facing historic structures, little consensus was obtained from the survey. On the issue of “Currently, what is the greatest threat to historic structures in Western Pennsylvania?” the following responses were received:

- ◆ 25% answered lack of investment funds,
- ◆ 20% answered public apathy,
- ◆ 13% answered neighborhood decline,
- ◆ 18% answered automobile-dependent growth, and
- ◆ 18% answered lack of economic growth.

On the issue of “In the next five years, what will be the greatest threat to historic properties in Western Pennsylvania?” the same lack of consensus was reflected in the responses that were received:

- ◆ 30% answered lack of investment funds,
- ◆ 24% answered lack of economic growth,
- ◆ 19% answered automobile-dependent growth,
- ◆ 16% answered public apathy, and
- ◆ 6% answered neighborhood decline.

One of the 3% of the respondents seemed to capture the results of this question when the respondent answered “Other” and provided the explanation that “I don’t know that I could pick just one of the options as being the main impediment. I think all of them play a role.” As this respondent indicates, perhaps this lack of consensus or one or two clearly defined priorities suggests that our work as preservationists is especially difficult because there are so many issues to be addressed.

The numerous issues confronting preservationists in southwestern Pennsylvania is verified by the responses to the questions that asked “Have there been any historic and/or architecturally significant building(s) torn down in your neighborhood within the past five years?”



Thirty eight percent answered “yes,” 25% answered “no,” and 36% did not know. Those who chose “yes” were given the opportunity to explain further and took full advantage of that opportunity with 20 explanations provided. The explanations revealed the obstacles and frustrations facing preservationists.

For example, a respondent answered that “Older barns, log houses, farm houses, etc. have been demolished in my neighborhood as upscale housing developments have been built. Two schools have been demolished to make way for a new school and a new senior housing facility — only to discover that the school buildings could have been restored at less cost and the senior facility which was supposed to produce tax revenue went the UPMC non-profit route.” Several respondents lamented the loss of neighborhood housing for surface parking, i.e. “Quality neighborhood context [housing stock] was torn down to create unsightly context [parking lot]. Before long, the predominant neighborhood context will be asphalt paving, which I view as undesirable.”

Finally, a respondent found fault with a lack of vision and funds when he answered that “Deterioration of these structures has been the reason and no vision that most buildings CAN be renovated to protect the facade at least. Need funds for code enforcement in small towns with historic structures.” Clearly, the problems facing preservation in southwestern Pennsylvania are varied and complex.

### **3. Political Leaders Underestimating Importance of Preservation**

The final broad trend revealed by the survey’s results suggests that the region’s political leaders maybe underestimating the importance of preservation to their constituents. When asked if “Community leaders in my neighborhood do a good job protecting historic structures,” 11 % strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 28% had no opinion, 20% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. An issue which should be of particular interest to political leaders and planning agencies is the problem of vacant and abandoned properties. When asked “How should communities in Western Pennsylvania best deal with vacant and abandoned properties?” the most popular response was to

“Give local neighborhoods a voice relative to which abandoned structures should remain standing and which structures should be demolished so that they can help shape their own communities” with 53 % of the responses. The second most popular response, with 39% of the responses, was to “Create city or county-wide historic review boards to identify and facilitate the preservation of historically and architecturally-significant buildings which are vacant.”

Both options seem to resonate with community residents as opposed to “Tearing Buildings Down (3%)” or “Other” with 1%. At this question, respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional feedback, which they provided in abundance. For instance, one respondent writes “A coordinated effort, with foundation help, to get vacant buildings into the hands of homeowners. If a foundation could clear the liens and create a pool of homes for sale, hundreds might be saved. Right now the process is too lengthy and burdensome.”

Another reiterates that community involvement is key: “Financial incentives should be given to the private sector so that vacant and historic structures can profitably be put to use. Simply preserving history and structures and thwarting new development doesn’t do the economy or society any good. The incentives and efforts must be focused on actual use, profitability and maintenance into the future.”

And finally, a respondent provides a carefully articulated response,

“Abandoned buildings that present a blight or danger to a community must be dealt w/ immediately. Maybe a state-wide fund should be created to help maintain them or to remove the environmental hazard that many of these buildings present (asbestos, lead paint, mold) in the interim while the community works with the public and private sector to redevelop the buildings. Simply saving buildings for the sake of saving them is a bad idea. Many older, sometimes ‘historic’ buildings sit in disrepair blighting communities. It is not clear to me that these buildings should be saved in perpetuity. The best solution is to make it easy for private developers to rehab older buildings rather than tear down or build in a greenfield. Taking full advantage of historic tax credits, historic easements, and other incentives. A state historic tax credit would help this process.”



# Methodology

Fayette County Farm.

The results of the YPA Survey are a sampling of 133 voluntary responses to a variety of questions pertaining to historic preservation in the region. The period for responses was limited to four months, from November 19, 2003, through February 3, 2004. The survey was sent via e-mail to a wide variety of people in the southwestern Pennsylvania region by YPA Board Members. Most of those who chose to respond were not YPA Members.

Responses were collected from individuals who reside in 47 different zip codes that include each of the following counties: Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland. Responses were also received from Adams, Dauphin and Franklin counties in central Pennsylvania. The largest number of responses were received from Allegheny County zip codes 15206 (East Liberty/Friendship) and 12 were received from zip code 15217 (Squirrel Hill). The map on page 11 illustrates the concentration of responses received.

The demographics collected from the survey reveal that individuals under 40 years of age accounted for exactly 50% of the responses and the most popular age bracket was 31-35 years of age with 24% of the responses. The youngest five respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25, while the three oldest respondents were over 65 years old. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (81%) defined themselves as Caucasian/White while 6% defined themselves as African-American/Black. 2% of the respondents were Asian/Pacific Islanders and we received no responses from Hispanic/Latinos or Indian/Alaskan Natives. Six percent of

the total respondents choose not to answer this question about their ethnicity.

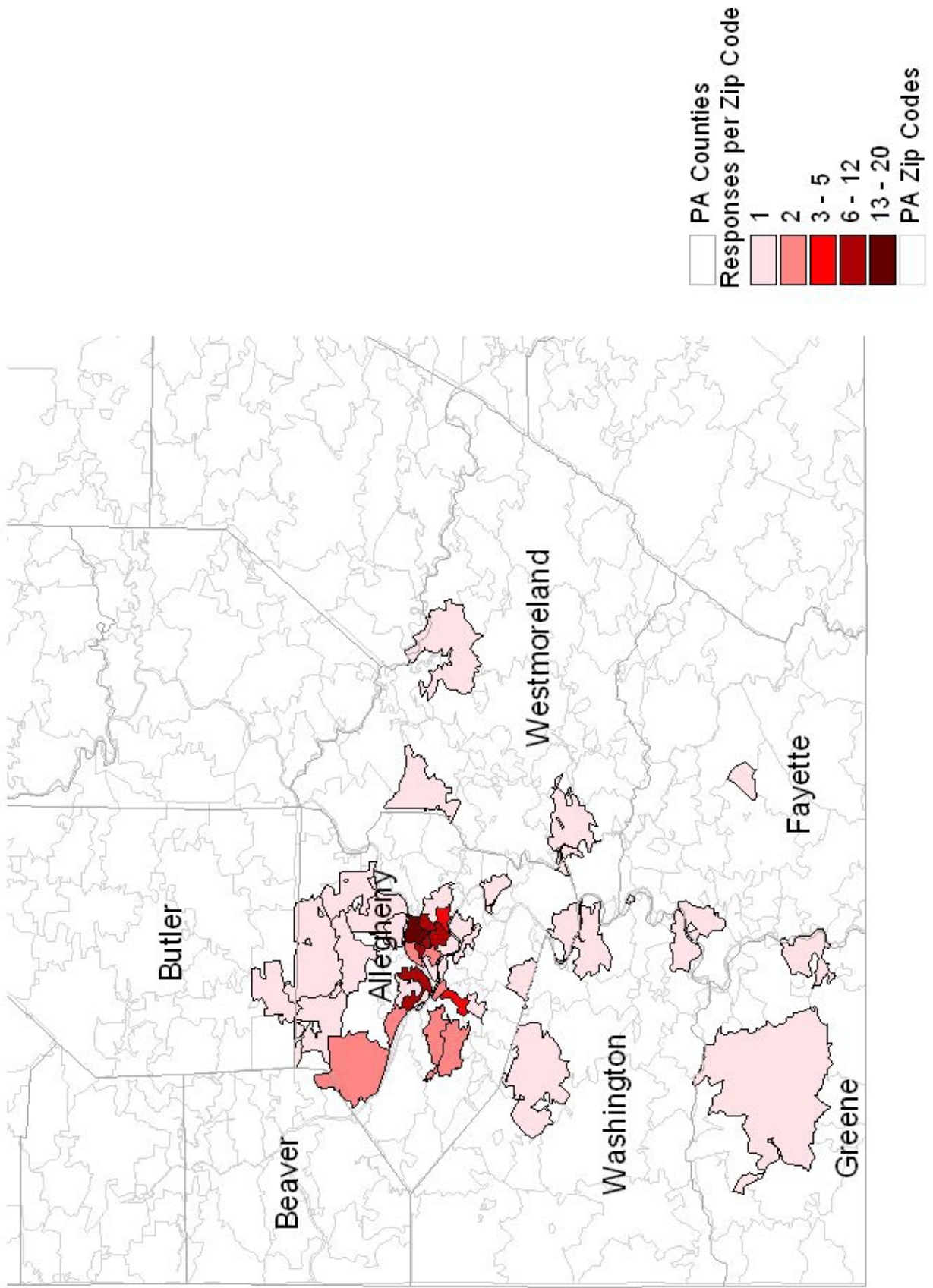
In regard to the annual household income of the respondents, the results were somewhat surprising. The largest group of respondents (21%) were those earning over \$100,000 in annual household income, and the rest of the respondents display a relatively evenly dispersion of annual income.

It is our hope that, as this survey breaks new ground, it serves as a template for a larger survey of wider geographic and topical scope. Such a survey would provide preservationists with additional details to better gauge the impact of our work. For YPA, this survey is a starting point to determine how successful we have been in our mission to promote the active participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources.



Restoring the details in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville neighborhood.

# YPA Survey Responses in Southwest PA Zip Codes



## Detailed Survey Results & Interpretations

Below are the results obtained from the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh's first-ever online survey of Western Pennsylvania's sentiments toward historic preservation. The non-scientific, self-selecting survey was conducted from 11/19/2003 through 2/3/2004 and collected responses from 133 individuals in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties as well as several responses from counties outside the region. Seventeen questions were asked on issues pertaining to historic preservation and the respondents' demographics. In many instances, the respondents also elaborated with specific examples. None of the responses are statistically significant. The survey was conducted over the Internet and was based on a survey format and technology provided by the Community Connections Department at the Heinz School at Carnegie Mellon University.

An outline of the survey questions, results and respondents' comments follow below.

### ***Q. 1) Preserving the history of Western Pennsylvania is important for the future of the region.***

a) Strongly agree	92	73%
b) Agree	28	22%
c) Disagree	3	2%
d) Strongly disagree	1	<1%
e) No opinion	1	<1%
Null	1	<1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### *Interpretation*

Although the first question is fairly straightforward with a predictable outcome (given the limited number of survey respondents), it shows that respondents had a high degree of concern for historic preservation as a tool for creating a better future for southwestern Pennsylvania.

Nearly three-quarters of all respondents strongly agreed with the statement that preservation of the region's history is important to its future; only one person strongly disagreed with the statement.

### ***Q. 2) Pittsburgh has done a good job in protecting historic structures.***

a) Strongly Agree	4	3%
b) Agree	60	47.5%
c) No Opinion	21	16.5%
d) Disagree	29	23%
e) Strongly Disagree	12	10%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### *Interpretation*

Responses to this question show that nearly half of all respondents agree that the City of Pittsburgh has done a good job in protecting its historic assets. Clearly, respondents recognize the preservation success stories in Pittsburgh—Main Streets, historic districts, Station Square. But only three percent strongly agreed with the statement, and this suggests only tepid agreement that the City has been pro-preservation.

A third of the respondents think the City could do a better job, including 10% who "strongly" disagreed that Pittsburgh has protected its historic structures. This should not be an indictment of City government or of any one actor or organization, but of the overall environment for preserving historic structures. The individual responses to question 9 demonstrate that specific preservation "losses," including the ripping out of the Mellon Bank interior and other high-profile demolitions has soured people's views toward using public funds in ways that run counter to historic preservation.

### ***Q. 3) Historic rural areas in Western Pennsylvania are currently threatened by development pressures.***

a) Strongly Agree	55	44%
b) Agree	46	37%
c) No Opinion	20	16%
d) Disagree	4	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### *Interpretation*

Responses to this question show a high degree of awareness of the "sprawl" problem, or unplanned and unbridled development, which has taken its toll on the region's greenspaces and historic structures. The fact that only three percent disagreed with this

statement suggests the threat of development pressures is a very negative factor in the region's future growth.

***Q. 4) Regional planning agencies and elected officials should be given greater incentives to work within growth control guidelines, such as historic preservation ordinances, regarding development of the region.***

a) Strongly Agree	72	57%
b) Agree	46	36%
c) No Opinion	3	2%
d) Disagree	5	4%
e) Strongly Disagree	1	1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

Respondents to this question clearly placed a high value on public (i.e. democratic) tools as a way to help preserve and maintain southwestern Pennsylvania's communities. In other words, people want more power to shape their own communities. But it also should be understood that "incentives" can be interpreted differently. Are these public incentives, private incentives? The question does not specify, although the term "historic preservation ordinances" is used, suggesting that respondents favor greater use of the public process to safeguard historic assets. Only six people disagreed or strongly disagreed, putting to rest the notion that there is little public support for greater citizen control over land-use decisions.

***Q. 5) Preservation of the region's older buildings and towns should be given equal, greater, or less [choose one] emphasis than development of new areas in Western Pennsylvania?***

a) Equal	48	38.4%
b) Greater	74	59.2%
c) Less	3	2.4%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

Results for this question show a strong desire by the respondents for more emphasis on reinvesting in older communities, such as historic Main Streets, rather than "greenfield" sites.

It also shows the negative impact of unplanned sprawl, which consumes an enormous amount of land (only three people in the survey think that development in new areas, typically characterized by sprawl, should be given importance).

Responses to this question are consistent with the recommendations by the Brookings Institution report, "Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Pennsylvania," released in 2003. The report recommends that the state promote large-scale reinvestment in older urban areas, including Main Streets and brownfields. This approach is supported by nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents.

***Q. 6) Growth and development in my neighborhood has contributed positively to the overall life of the community.***

a) Strongly Agree	38	28.5%
b) Agree	37	27.8%
c) No Opinion	37	27.8%
d) Disagree	17	12.8%
e) Strongly Disagree	4	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

Responses to this question show very mixed reactions to "development." People seem to show satisfaction with current growth trends in their neighborhoods—a new Whole Foods supermarket, for instance. But it also shows high satisfaction with where people live, which is to be expected (if they had low satisfaction, they would move).

Also, because most of the respondents were based in older, urban areas (20 of the responses, or 15% of the total, came from the Friendship-East Liberty ZIP code 15206), growth in recent years has been moderated by various forces, including zoning regulations, and the work of nonprofit community development corporations, which has done a lot of the development work in Pittsburgh's East End.

**Q. 7) Community leaders in my neighborhood do a good job of protecting historic structures.**

a) Strongly Agree	13	10.5%
b) Agree	47	38.5%
c) No Opinion	34	28%
d) Disagree	24	20%
e) Strongly Disagree	4	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

People who responded to this question seemed to show mixed feelings about the preservation work that community leaders have performed. Neighborhoods like Manchester, Central North Side, and Friendship have had a lot of preservation successes. This may account for the nearly 40% of respondents who agree with the statement, though not “strongly.”

However, respondents also seem to indicate that community leaders could do a better job. Only 10% of respondents indicated that they “strongly agree” with the preservation work of community leaders. Twenty-eight percent expressed “no opinion,” which suggests mixed feelings about their community leaders. Significantly, 20% were not happy with their community leaders’ preservation work.

Community development in the Pittsburgh region has been successful in attracting jobs, creating new housing opportunities, and revitalizing communities. But it has not always been built around preservation and reuse of historic structures. There are many success stories, such as the Penn Avenue arts corridor, East Liberty’s rebirth, or South Side’s Main Street. But often, preservationists find themselves alone in trying to protect and restore individual historic properties that otherwise escaped the purview of many community development practitioners. This may be explained by various funding streams devoted to specific purposes, such as job creation or affordable housing.

Frequently, the hardest deals to fund, finance, and restore—and the most critical as keystones to the community—are the large historic properties, such as the New Granada Theater in the Hill, the B’Nai Israel Synagogue in Garfield, or the National Negro

Opera Company site in Homewood—all of which have been given little or no attention by area CDCs.

**Q. 8) Have there been any historic and/or architecturally significant building(s) torn down in your neighborhood within the past five years?**

a) Yes	47	37.9%
b) No	31	25.0%
c) Don’t Know	45	36.3%
d) Please explain why you chose “yes” (optional).		
Null	1	1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Interpretation*

Respondents to this question demonstrated a high awareness of significant preservation losses in their neighborhoods. Nearly 40% said there were significant structures demolished in their communities. Furthermore, out of the 47 people who said “yes,” 20 wrote individual explanations that bolster their selection. The explanations listed below show that people continue to lament the loss of their original community fabric and landmark structures that gave their communities a unique feel. While it is significant to note that a quarter of the respondents said “no” to the question, a larger number were not sure. This may mean that people were not sure if a building was officially “historic” or “architecturally significant.”

**Q. 8) Respondent Explanations:**

*Chatham College has demolished several old homes on the upper part of my street—Murray Hill Place. To me this was uncalled for by a college.*

*Despite all our efforts to protect historic structures, big business has more clout—it’s hard to fight UPMC, Don Allen and the mayor. Although I must tell you that there are also a number of structures that have been saved, such as the Penn Avenue townhouses and the building that now houses Eckerd on Baum—Eckerd was extremely cooperative in working with the neighborhood to use an existing building, and believe, we appreciate that and cite them as an example of how neighborhoods and businesses can work together.*

*Deterioration of these structures and a lack of vision that most buildings CAN be renovated to protect the facade are the reasons. Need funds for code enforcement in small towns with historic structures.*

*Don Allen Chevrolet tore down a lovely house to build a used car lot, despite objections from the community. And all the architecturally significant details were destroyed. e.g. house on Aiken St near Baum Blvd torn down for parking lot (FRIENDSHIP).*

*I consider downtown Pittsburgh as part of "my community" as well as the neighborhood I live in. I felt that the destruction of the Mellon Bank downtown main branch banking hall to create the "vanilla" space of Lord & Taylors was a shameful tragedy, and especially offensive when you consider it was largely paid for by our tax dollars. I was additionally disappointed that more of the old steel mill structures at the Waterfront development weren't saved/ incorporated into the development with more of a tribute to our steel heritage.*

*I have seen probably 25 - 30 buildings torn down in the last year.*

*Mexican War Streets has many structures that have been in serious disrepair for many years. It is clear that many of these houses—some of which may or may not have historical value—were deemed un-repairable from an economic perspective.*

*Murray Hill Place was leveled by Chatham College.*

*Oakland is going through constant change and redevelopment. Many historic building regularly undergo demolition to make way for new structures, and others undergo "remuddling" to suit the need of the current occupant or owner. I would have considered a number of the residences removed to create Bouquet Gardens historically and architecturally significant, although in poor shape.*

*The dorms are fashioned in an artificial historic style, which, architecturally speaking, are a pale comparison to the buildings that they replaced.*

*Many other historic properties are threatened not by development but by neglect, including the growing number of houses owned by absentee landlords.*

*Older barns, log houses, farm houses, etc. have been demolished in my neighborhood as upscale housing developments have been built. Two schools have been demolished to make way for a new school and a new senior housing facility—only to discover that the school buildings could have been restored at less cost and the senior facility which was supposed to produce tax revenue went the UPMC non-profit route.*

*Quality neighborhood context [housing stock] was torn down to create unsightly context [parking lot]. Before long, the predominant neighborhood context will be asphalt paving, which I view as undesirable.*

*Quite a few restorable buildings get demolished every year in Lawrenceville because they've become drug houses or just eyesores and residents want them removed. There isn't enough demand or public money to restore them, so they're taken down.*

*Several historic structures had been torn down due to new development. I understand that renovation of older structures often costs more than new.*

*Several large, old houses have been torn down on the periphery of Friendship.*

*Several large, old houses on the periphery of Friendship have been demolished.*

*Several properties have been demolished by the City before private owners or the CDC has had sufficient time to purchase them.*

*St. Francis Chapel and possibly other original St. Francis Buildings. Yet, PHLF did nothing to bring this to anyone's attention and it was ignored. Could have been incorporated into the new building designs of Children's Hospital.*

*The Waterfront [at Homestead].*

**Q. 9) How should communities in Western Pennsylvania best deal with vacant and abandoned properties?**

- a) Tear down abandoned buildings.
- b) Create city or county-wide historic review boards to identify and facilitate the preservation of historically and architecturally-significant buildings which are vacant.
- c) Give local neighborhoods a voice relative to which abandoned structures should remain standing and which structures should be demolished so that they can help shape their own communities.
- d) No Opinion.
- e) Other
- f) Please explain what other ways abandoned properties should be handled.

The issue of vacant and abandoned properties looms large in southwestern Pennsylvania. Decades of population, job, and business losses have manifested themselves in abandoned properties. The disposition of vacant and abandoned properties is a complex one that has a variety of experts working on solutions across Pennsylvania.

Despite the complexity of solutions, a vast majority of people favored trying to find democratic (neighborhood-based or local government-based) solutions for dealing with vacant properties other than tearing them down; only three people out of 124 respondents favored demolition.

A majority of respondents (53%) favored giving local communities greater control over how to deal with vacant properties. Another large number (nearly 40%) wanted to give power to city or county-wide historic review boards as a way to facilitate preservation and reuse of vacant structures, particularly those which are architecturally and historically significant.

**Q. 9) Responses regarding vacant properties.**

a) Tear them down	3	2%
b) Create review boards	48	39%
c) Give neighborhoods a voice	66	53%
d) No Opinion	1	1%
e) Other	5	4%
Null	1	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>99%</b>

*Interpretation*

A few of the respondents showed a high degree of motivation for dealing with abandoned sites. The five individual responses, listed below, provided a variety of good ideas—all different—for how to deal with vacant properties. Some call for foundation leadership, government incentives like tax credits, public review panels, private-sector incentives, and even an innovative model based on one that works in Amsterdam (“squatters rights”). Some of these solutions are currently in the works, which bodes well for future solutions for dealing with vacant properties.

**Q. 9, f) Respondent Explanations:**

*A coordinated effort, with foundation help, to get vacant buildings into the hands of homeowners. If a foundation could clear the liens and create a pool of homes for sale, hundreds might be saved. Right now the process is too lengthy and burdensome.*

*Abandoned buildings that present a blight or danger to a community must be dealt w/ immediately. Maybe a state-wide fund should be created to help maintain them or to remove the environmental hazard that many of these buildings present (asbestos, lead paint, mold) in the interim while the community works with the public and private sector to redevelop the buildings. Simply saving buildings for the sake of saving them is a bad idea. Many older, sometimes 'historic' buildings sit in disrepair blighting communities.*

*It is not clear to me that these buildings should be saved in perpetuity. The best solution is to make it easy for private developers to rehab older buildings rather than tear down or build in a greenfield.*



*Taking full advantage of historic tax credits, historic easements, and other incentives. A state historic tax credit would help this process.*

*As suggested a panel should review the buildings to decide, but I do not like the idea of them being government appointed. They tend to make bad decisions—such as the one that’s being made on Penn Avenue at the Convention Center. Also, in order for you survey to be valuable, it’s important to know where the participant is from. I happen to be from East Allegheny, also known as Deutschtown, where we have avid preservationists. Not every community has concerned leaders like ours.*

*Financial incentives should be given to the private sector so that vacant and historic structures can profitably be put to use. Simply preserving history and structures and thwarting new development doesn’t do the economy or society any good. The incentives and efforts must be focused on actual use, profitability and maintenance into the future.*

*In addition to giving communities a say we should have squatters rights like in Amsterdam where individuals and groups recover abandoned properties and, if they fix them up to code, receive ownership. It has practically eliminated abandoned properties in the city.*

**Q. 10) Currently, what is the greatest threat to historic structures in Western Pennsylvania?**

a) Public Apathy	25	20%
b) Lack of investment funds	30	25%
c) Neighborhood decline	16	13%
d) Automobile-dependent growth	22	18%
e) Lack of economic growth	22	18%
f) Other	4	3%
g) Please explain what other threat(s)		
Null	3	2%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

Responses to this question were spread fairly evenly, but most point toward the loss of economic vitality in the region.

The largest number of responses indicates a lack of investment funds in the region remains the greatest threat to historic preservation. Interestingly, a fifth of respondents believed that public apathy—whether perceived or real—leaves historic properties vulnerable. This may be because people are focused more on just getting by economically than they are saving their communities’ landmarks.

But the large and energized responses to the Fifth-and-Forbes development in downtown Pittsburgh show that people are less apathetic when it comes to historic properties of great importance. Still, there remains a void in leadership—both public and private—that seeks to rally citizen support for historic preservation on a regional level. This, too, could contribute to public apathy.

The other two “threats”—auto-dependent growth and lack of economic growth—may seem to run counter, but they indicate that car-dependent growth (i.e. sprawl) continues to draw investment away from core communities. With that is the economic development (and investment funds) that the region’s older communities need.

**Q. 10) Respondent Explanations:**

[Only two explanations were provided.]

*Long wall coal mining .*

*Political leaders.*

*Interpretation*

Other specific threats, “longwall coal mining” and “political leaders,” were also provided by respondents beyond the list provided. In particular, Greene, Fayette, and Washington counties have been hard hit by longwall mining, which has devastated many National Register-listed historic homes. “Political leaders” is a vague term, but clearly a respondent was not pleased with how his or her elected officials were dealing with historic preservation issues. This could also relate to the “public apathy” responses—a lack of leadership to rally public support behind preservation.

**Q. 11) In the next five years, what will be the greatest threat to historic properties in Western Pennsylvania?**

a) Public Apathy	19	16%
b) Lack of investment funds	36	30%
c) Neighborhood decline	7	6%
d) Automobile-dependent growth	23	19%
e) Lack of economic growth	29	24%
f) Other	4	3%
g) Please explain what other threat.		
Null	4	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

People who responded to this last substantive question in the survey indicate that the lack of growth and investment that has dogged southwestern Pennsylvania will continue to be the region's greatest threats to historic preservation. This mirrors the responses to question 10. This presents the question, will there be more of the same (population decline and job losses) or is there some reason for hope.

Surprisingly, sprawl in the form of car-dependent growth, was not as prominent as a future threat to preservation. Still, the lack of public engagement ("apathy"), while less of a threat than the other issues, remains a risk factor in historic preservation. Perhaps respondents believe that the continued decline of the region will continue to fuel a depressed and nihilistic outlook for the region.

**Q. 11) Explanations:**

*Failure of leadership in the political and planning community.*

*I don't know that I could pick just one of the options as being the main impediment. I think all of them play a role.*

*Long wall coal mining (featured in a series of articles on the Post Gazette's website).*

*Political leaders.*

*Interpretation*

Individual responses indicate a deeper need for leadership to come to the forefront to provide a vision for preservation of the region's heritage. Community leaders are often alone in their support for the region's history. These responses suggest a need for greater public commitment to historic preservation by elected officials, as well as the private sector.

**Q. 12) Are you a member of the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh?**

a) Yes	11	9%
b) No	70	57%
c) No, but please keep me informed of YPA events.	38	31%
Null	4	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

Although the sample size was small and many people may be sympathetic to historic preservation issues, the vast majority of respondents were not members of YPA. This shows that YPA Members did not dominate the survey results.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**Q. 13) Please indicate your gender.**

Male	65	52%
Female	55	44%
Null	5	4%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q. 14) Please indicate your ethnicity.**

a) Asian/Pacific Islander	3	2%
b) Black/African-American	6	5%
c) Caucasian/White	102	81%
d) Hispanic/Latino	0	0%
e) Indian/Alaskan Native	0	0%
f) Other	2	2%
g) Prefer not to answer	8	6%
Null	5	4%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q. 15) Please indicate your age.**

a) Under 18	0	0%
b) 18 - 25	6	5%
c) 26 - 30	12	9%
d) 31 - 35	30	24%
e) 36 - 40	15	12%
f) 41 - 45	15	12%
g) 46 - 50	14	11%
h) 51 - 55	15	12%
i) 56 - 60	6	5%
j) 61 - 65	4	3%
k) Over 65	4	3%
Null	6	5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q. 16) What is your annual household income?**

	Number	Percent
a) Less than \$10,000	3	2%
b) \$10,000 - \$19,999.99	3	2%
c) \$20,000 - \$29,999.99	10	8%
d) \$30,000 - \$39,999.99	9	7%
e) \$40,000 - \$49,999.99	13	10%
f) \$50,000 - \$59,999.99	10	8%
g) \$60,000 - \$69,999.99	9	7%
h) \$70,000 - \$79,999.99	11	9%
i) \$80,000 - \$89,999.99	14	11%
j) \$90,000 - \$99,999.99	3	2%
k) \$100,000+	26	21%
Null	13	10%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation*

The demographic profile of survey respondents shows that the YPA needs to do a better job of connecting with a younger, less affluent, and greater minority population. Only 12% of the respondents make under \$30,000 per year, and only 14% of the respondents were under the age of 30. The vast majority were white and in a higher-income category. The largest income category [21%] for respondents was in the \$100,000 per year income and higher range.



History is the centerpiece to downtown Uniontown's revival.



# About the Young Preservationists

Pittsburgh's Ninth Street Bridge.

Incorporated in 2002, YPA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit comprised of dynamic preservation leaders throughout the region organized to ignite a new historic preservation movement in southwestern Pennsylvania. The YPA is built on a business model that is regional, youth-focused, and proactive.

## Mission & Values

The mission of Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh is the active participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources. Everyone who supports the next generation is a young preservationist. YPA believes that historic preservation is an effective tool for economic development and regional revitalization.

## Vision

YPA is a primary catalyst, a coalition builder, and central resource for historic preservation in southwestern Pennsylvania. We encourage young people to take an active role in the preservation of historic resources in their communities. We encourage all people to work together toward a common agenda to create more robust communities by using historic preservation as a tool for economic and community development.

YPA will accomplish its mission in three ways: it will conduct educational seminars and interactive workshops, host tours and field sessions, and publish high-impact research that supports the mission and organizational values.

To date, YPA has published a list of the "Top Ten Best Historic Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area," conducted tours and educational sessions, facilitated preservation meetings regarding specific historic sites, spoke to elementary- and middle-school students as well as adults, co-sponsored a Black History Essay Contest, and sponsored the nomination of a historic African American site to be a City of Pittsburgh historic landmark.

YPA will emphasize several themes in its work: African American history, rural preservation, smart growth principles, Main Street revitalization, youth participation and leadership in civic affairs, and regional cooperation.

*Give life to history.*<sup>SM</sup>



*Give life to history.*<sup>SM</sup>

### **YPA Mission**

*The active participation of young people in the preservation of historic resources.*

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