



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HISTORIC NASHVILLE, INC.'S 2009 NASHVILLE NINE SIX MONTHS LATER, WHAT'S THE STATUS OF NASHVILLE'S MOST ENDANGERED PROPERTIES?

Nashville – Six months ago, Historic Nashville, Inc. (HNI) announced the 2009 “Nashville Nine,” a list of endangered historic properties as nominated by the public. The Nashville Nine featured nine historic properties – such as neighborhood schools, neon signs, distinctive homes, and a cemetery chapel - threatened by demolition, neglect, and commercial development. More information on the original list can be found at www.historicnashvilleinc.org. Since the Nashville Nine list was published, HNI has worked with community leaders and property owners to save these landmarks. Today, HNI announces a status report on the Nashville Nine.

“The 2009 Nashville Nine generated a tremendous amount of attention from the press and general public,” stated David Price, HNI Board President and Nashville Nine committee chairman. “The reaction that it received revealed that people in Nashville are eager to stand up and advocate for the city’s historic places. We had calls and emails from people wanting to volunteer on building rehabilitation projects, and a local roofing contractor offered to provide his company’s services at no cost to any of the listed properties,” Price added, “As this update reveals, the efforts and enthusiasm of the local community to save historic places that matter to them cannot be underestimated.”

Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ –BAD NEWS, DEMOLITION IMMINENT

Despite continued opposition by neighboring property owners in the Sylvan Park community, the Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ congregation has signaled plans to demolish its 1921 house of worship upon issuance of a city permit. HNI urges the congregation to reconsider this decision and leave open the possibility of selling the property to a buyer who will preserve the church and develop the surrounding 1.68-acre property. “Neighborhood preservation and economic development can be accomplished simultaneously in this instance, but only if the beloved landmark church is not torn down,” states Price. “We understand that Councilman Jason Holleman has offered to work with the congregation to alter the zoning on the church’s property in order to make the preservation of the building more financially feasible. Unfortunately, the congregation appears to have declined that assistance and is moving ahead with plans for demolition. HNI hopes the congregation will reconsider, and we are willing to assist in supporting the rezoning initiative and otherwise aiding the preservation effort.”

Mt. Olivet Cemetery Chapel and Office – GOOD NEWS, SITUATION IMPROVED

After recent negotiations with HNI, the Metro Historical Commission, and the Tennessee Preservation Trust, the New Orleans-based company (Stewart Enterprises) that owns and manages Mt. Olivet Cemetery, has agreed to withdraw its demolition permit and consider options for the rehabilitation of its historic chapel and office. After attention was drawn to the deteriorated condition of the building, the owner secured the property by installing plywood over the windows and a new fence to keep out intruders and vandals. The owners are currently reviewing a draft historic structures report prepared at no charge by the above interested parties; this report outlines general preservation options for the property and financial tools available for rehabilitation. “We are grateful that the owners have reversed their decision to demolish this rare historic landmark and look forward to developing a plan of action that will result in its preservation,” stated Price.

U.S. Post Office in the Arcade – GOOD NEWS, SAVED!

After public outcry and many letters and phone calls from HNI members to elected officials and the U.S. Post Office staff, the U.S. Postal Service removed the historic Arcade Post Office from its list of locations for possible closure in October of 2009. As a result, daily post office foot traffic will continue to benefit other businesses in the historic downtown Arcade. “A post office has operated in the downtown Arcade for over a century,” stated Price. “We won a temporary reprieve, but will continue to monitor the status of this important federal building to ensure that it remains open.”

Historic Neon Signs – GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

Neon fans across the city rejoiced when the landmark “Donut Den” neon sign was reinstalled above the venerable Green Hills donut shop last fall. That victory was shortly followed by dismay at the removal and destruction of the fantastic neon sign at the downtown Walter Nipper’s Sporting Goods on 8th Avenue North (Rosa L. Parks Blvd.). “Historic neon signs from the mid-twentieth century remain threatened in Nashville,” stated Price. “We will continue to advocate for their preservation and explore tools that will enable Nashville to retain these beloved landmarks through the city.” HNI encourages the Metropolitan Planning Commission to revise SP zoning districts to strengthen protections for historic neon signs, with an emphasis on the recently approved Main Street-Gallatin Road SP district.

McC Campbell House – GOOD NEWS, SITUATION MUCH IMPROVED

The Tennessee State Museum now owns this circa-1800 house in Donelson and has committed to rehabilitate the building, though whether the property will be put to public or private use is still undetermined. Staff at the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation prepared a historic structures report for the building at no charge. Initial phases of rehabilitation for the property will focus on trimming trees, removing debris, and cleaning up the landscaping. “The Metro and Tennessee Historical Commissions should be commended for preparing a National Register of Historic Places nomination for this 210-year old building,” stated Price. “We hope these tools will result in a more comprehensive preservation plan for the McC Campbell House.”

Home for Aged Masons – BAD NEWS, SITUATION WORSE

This state-owned property in Inglewood continues to be threatened by neglect with no current plans for rehabilitation. “The Metro Historical Commission completed a National Register of Historic Places nomination for this 100-year old landmark in 2008 and has monitored talks between the state and interested private individuals on options to re-use the property,” stated Price. “But, talks seemed to have stalled. We encourage state and city officials to reengage these talks and involve the local Inglewood community in creating an innovative solution to preserving this landmark, which is continuing to deteriorate due to inaction by state government.”

Jackson House – GOOD NEWS, NO CHANGE

This Folk Victorian farmhouse and its surrounding acreage on Brick Church Pike has not yet been subdivided or developed, but its close proximity to I-24 has the potential to make it attractive to future developers. “Well-maintained farmhouses such as the Jackson House are becoming a rare commodity in Nashville,” explained Price. “We encourage the owners to consider options that would strike a balance between preserving the farm and developing the property in a way that is environmentally sustainable.”

“Silverdene” (Lawrence Finn House) – BAD NEWS, DEMOLITION IMMINENT

This severely deteriorated 1860s home at 931 Main Street in East Nashville is in worse shape than it was last September when the Nashville Nine list was first announced. Since that time vagrants have pried off the protective plywood panels covering its windows and entries, leaving it extremely vulnerable to vandalism and the elements. Numerous holes in the roof are letting in rain water that has resulted in major structural damage. “The property owner has allowed this 150-year old East Nashville landmark to be demolished by neglect,” stated Price. “Unfortunately, demolition of this unique landmark is inevitable due to the inaction of the property owner.”

Historic Neighborhood Schools – BAD NEWS, NO CHANGE

Surplus school properties are still threatened by demolition and neglect throughout the city. The owners of the historic Ransom School on Elmington Place off of West End intend to demolish the building for a new housing development. “The city is considering selling surplus neighborhood school buildings,” explained Price. “We encourage the city to explore ways to preserve these historic landmarks with easements and overlays that would allow them to be adaptively reused with new development.”

About Historic Nashville, Inc.:

Historic Nashville, Inc. was originally chartered in 1968 as “The Historic Sites Federation of Tennessee.” In 1975, the name and mission changed in response to the urgency of threats to historic landmarks in Nashville. The nonprofit 501(c)3 organization became “Historic Nashville, Inc.” Our mission is to work to preserve, revitalize, and enhance the natural, built, and cultural heritage of Nashville and Davidson County through education, partnerships, and advocacy. Over the years, HNI has successfully advocated for the preservation of many landmarks, including the Ryman Auditorium, Union Station, Hermitage Hotel, Shelby Street Bridge, and Union Stockyard as well as the Second Avenue, Printer’s Alley, Lower Broadway, and East Nashville historic districts. In 1982, HNI established the state’s first Preservation Easement program and currently owns easements on 16 historic landmarks with a market value of over \$30 million. HNI hosts an annual membership meeting, publishes a newsletter, maintains a website, gives special tours of local historic landmarks, and recently launched the annual “Nashville Nine” endangered properties list. Visit www.historicnashvilleinc.org for more information.