

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Weeksville Heritage Center Begins Critical Preservation Work on the Historic Hunterfly Road Houses with Nearly \$400,000 in Philanthropic Support

Pivotal Support Underwritten by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Express and the New York Landmarks Conservancy

(Brooklyn, NY)-- Weeksville Heritage Center (WHC), a one-of-a-kind historic house museum that brings to life the history of one of the largest free black communities in pre-Civil War America through its arts, culture and preservation efforts, announces the start of much-needed preservation work on its key historic assets, the Hunterfly Road Houses. The work on the three original structures from the mid-19th and early-20th century that are the last remaining physical evidence of the existence of the community of Weeksville, Brooklyn, is made possible through the generous support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Express and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

“Given the economic challenges New York City is facing due to COVID-19, especially the cuts to the City’s capital budgets, there’s no way we could’ve done this work without the support of these philanthropic partners,” noted Rob Fields, WHC’s president and executive director.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) funded Weeksville’s preservation manager position, enabling the work to be overseen by someone with hands-on knowledge of the specific needs of historic houses. For this role, WHC tapped Zulmilena Then, who comes to Weeksville with a focus on preservation work in underrepresented communities, having founded Preserving East New York, and was the recipient of NTHP’s 2018 40 Under 40: People Saving Places Award.

“Among the areas in our purview, we focus on preserving sites of activism, achievement and community, and Weeksville falls squarely in this category,” says Brent Leggs, executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “With this in mind, we are thrilled to provide the resources that enable Weeksville to hire stellar preservation talent to protect the legacy and inspiration the Historic Hunterfly Road Houses represent.”

A longtime supporter of Weeksville, the New York Landmarks Conservancy provided key infrastructure repairs to the Hunterfly Road Houses. “The Landmarks Conservancy is proud of our long relationship with Weeksville, and honored to have had [Weeksville’s founding

executive director] Joan Maynard on our Board,” notes New York Landmarks Conservancy president Peg Breen. “In recent years we have given more than \$60,000 on grants to preserve Weeksville’s irreplaceable historic wooden homes. Continuing to assist Weeksville’s preservation is one of our top priorities.”

And, at a moment when the nation is elevating Black voices, it’s clear that preserving the history that provides the context for understanding the present is even more critical, and WHC’s funding partners are keenly aware of this, particularly American Express, which provided a \$250,000 multi-year grant.

“American Express is proud to continue its support of the Weeksville Heritage Center and aid in the restoration of the Hunterfly Road Houses,” said Timothy J. McClimon, President, American Express Foundation. “These historically significant residential remnants are an important part of the stories of African-American men and women who called Weeksville home.”

About Weeksville Heritage Center

Weeksville Heritage Center is an historic site and cultural center in Central Brooklyn that uses education, arts and a social justice lens to preserve, document and inspire engagement with the history of Weeksville, one of the largest free Black communities in pre-Civil War America. www.weeksvillesociety.org

About NTHP’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund is a multi-year initiative led by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in partnership with the Ford Foundation, The JPB Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and other partners, working to make an important and lasting contribution to our cultural landscape by elevating the stories and places of African American achievement and activism. www.savingplaces.org/actionfund

About The NY Landmarks Conservancy

The New York Landmarks Conservancy has loaned and granted more than \$52 million over the past 47 years, contributing to more than \$1 billion in preservation projects throughout New York. <https://nylandmarks.org/>

About American Express

American Express is a globally integrated payments company, providing customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. Learn more at americanexpress.com.

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