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*Preserve, Conserve and Protect
Sense of Place, Community, Spirit*

A Newsletter of Partners in Preservation, a 501c3 Nonprofit
And Preserving the Wildwoods, an Activism Committee

Summer 2021 | Volume 1 | Issue 2

Branding + Politics + Community Engagement = Preservation

By Jackson Betz, PTW Committee Member

Preservation is often an inherently uphill battle. The vast majority of preservationists' struggles involve buildings under private ownership, and there is no legal mechanism to encourage building owners to preserve, rather than replace, these historic properties. Even governmental initiatives, like the National Register of Historic Places and its state-level equivalents, cannot make building owners preserve historic structures. (Instead, the National Register provides incentives, like tax breaks, for historic property owners who preserve their buildings or renovate them in a historically authentic manner.) And even for historic structures under government ownership, short-sighted decisions often take precedence depending on budgetary or political concerns.

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Mythbusting Historic Preservation

By Christopher Tirri, PTW Committee Member

Critics of historic preservation often dismiss it and its supporters as being fixated on nostalgia for the past, unable to step out of memories and into the future. As Ken Bernstein writes, though, preservationists are not a group of curmudgeons adamantly opposed to change for the sake of being contrary; rather, they recognize the importance of grounding future development in what was unique, beautiful, and significant about the past. Our heritage is thus an invaluable way to revitalize local economies and create better, more sustainable and attractive communities.

Additionally, some homeowners express intense concern that historic preservation will infringe upon their property rights by supposedly preventing them from ever repairing or renovating their homes. Historic preservation laws, however, exhibit no more control over private property than do zoning laws, which have been an accepted (albeit not unproblematic) practice in planning since the early twentieth century. Zoning ordinances, as Bernstein rightfully highlights, prevent single-family homes from being replaced by McMansions or Big Box Condos. In a similar vein, historic preservation laws attempt to manage development, not block it entirely. Take the Historic Preservation Commission in the City of Cape May as an illustrative example: it is composed of an advisory board of 11 members that makes decisions and recommendations

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Preserving the Wildwoods president Taylor Henry addresses a City of Wildwood commissioners meeting on May 26. Photo courtesy Dennis Pierce.

Preserving the Wildwoods Pitches Historic Preservation to the City of Wildwood

By Dennis Pierce, PIP Trustee

On Wednesday, May 26, Preserving the Wildwoods presented at the biweekly City of Wildwood commissioners meeting. The presentation was done in conjunction with Preservation New Jersey, the leading statewide historic preservation non-profit. Three speakers covered ways that historic preservation and sustainable development can help Wildwood prepare for a successful future.

First up was Matt Pisarski, Department Head of Cumberland County's Department of Planning, Tourism & Community Affairs. Matt gave an overview of new regulations that the State of New Jersey will be enacting to address climate change. The upcoming regulations will impact new development so it will be important for Wildwood to start planning ahead and avoid overdevelopment on a flood-prone island.

After Matt was Barton Ross, the principal architect at the firm Barton Ross & Partners. Barton explained how historic commissions and districts work and he pointed

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A warm welcome to the new members of Preserving the Wildwoods committee: Jackson Betz, Christopher Tirri, Pary Lion Tell, Michael Hirsch, and Mary Lou Wilson! To join our team, visit <https://www.preservingthewildwoods.com/get-involved/>

Editorial: Wildwood Needs a Balance in its Information and its Architecture

By the Preserving the Wildwoods Editorial Board

Wildwood is a diverse place full of people with different ideas about what's best for the town. However, in the March 10 Press article "Wildwood mayor sees new hope in plans for major projects," only the government's and developers' viewpoints were included.

The article quotes the Mayor as saying, "Wildwood has had enough of the old stuff. It's time for something new." But that doesn't speak for all of Wildwood. On many of the Wildwood's social media groups, the main theme is the nostalgia offered by the Wildwoods' unique places. Also, over 2,700 people signed a petition against the demolition of the historic 1909 St. Ann's Rectory. This demonstrates that Wildwood is, in fact, not entirely done with the "old stuff." It's important for elected officials to represent all constituents, and that comment dismissed the concerns of a large number of citizens.

The redevelopment plan detailed in the article is described as receiving a "warm reception" at the March 1st planning meeting. Although there were some positive aspects of the plan, including emphasis on traditional architecture and adaptive reuse, we're not sure how this reaction was gauged, as public comment was not permitted during the presentation.

Finally, the article mentions previous attempts at downtown economic recovery, with the Mayor saying, "They were trying to make us something we're not." But is a government-managed plan that involves changing a historically commercial district into high-end residential via demolitions, eminent domain, and consolidation of lots just another way of making the town into something it's not? Does demolishing buildings automatically result in economic success? Many people who remember urban renewal, which decimated the downtown, might not be sold on this "new" idea.

The Mayor's enthusiasm and passion for Wildwood is great, and we all want what's best for Wildwood. Nonetheless, it takes a balanced approach to create positive change. A more balanced view of development projects should include voices from local preservation groups like us. We would've said that Wildwood needs old in addition to new, and that we can grow while respecting our history.

To join Preserving the Wildwoods's free email list, visit <https://www.preservingthewildwoods.com/newsletter>.

Mythbusting Historic Preservation



The iconic TWA Terminal in Queens was recently converted into a hotel in a historically sympathetic way. Photo courtesy Roland Arhelger, Wikimedia Commons.

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based on both federal and local design guidelines. While the board members carefully scrutinize applications for exterior renovations to any structures within the historic district, they do so in an effort to protect and enhance its defining characteristics.

In this way, historic preservation does not mean a structure must remain frozen in time. It also does not mean there is only a single way to "do" preservation. Preservation is one of six distinct approaches, where an owner maintains the structure as is, making very minor—if any—changes to it over time (e.g., Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina). It thus stands in stark contrast to renovation, which transforms a structure into a usable space but pays minimal attention to its historic provenance. The two most common approaches, though, are rehabilitation and restoration. Rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse, is the thoughtful reimagining of a historic structure for modern use that pays homage to its historic uses, stylistic flourishes, and cultural impact.

The TWA Terminal at the JFK Airport in Queens, New York is arguably one of the most iconic, successful large-scale rehabilitation projects in recent years. Restoration involves deliberately removing conflicting styles from within a single structure to more accurately depict a specific time period through form, color, and materials (e.g., Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, London).

The final two approaches are less common mostly due to how they complicate a structure or material's connection to its aura, a term popularized by Walter Benjamin to describe a work of art's connection to authenticity through time and space. Both reconstruction and reconstitution involve designing structures outside authenticity to varying degrees. On the one hand, reconstruction occurs when architects build a new structure out of a non-existing one in the likeness of the vernacular styles of a certain time period (e.g., the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia). While reconstructed buildings may bear a seemingly authentic resemblance to their predecessors, they ultimately remain replicas. On the other hand, reconstitution involves the use of materials from a razed structure as the basis for new construction. Compared to reconstruction, reconstitution thus achieves a slightly stronger connection to the original structure's aura through its reuse of materials.

However cliché it may sound, all six approaches to historic preservation share a common philosophy from Field of Dreams, which is that simply building or preserving something in the spirit of the past will most assuredly attract tourists, scholars, donors, and potential homeowners. The key is thus to recognize how the history of a place is entirely responsible for what it currently looks like, what it currently offers, and how it currently functions. To disregard that history may very well be what ultimately dooms a once-thriving community.

This is an excerpt of the full story, which is available at [preservingthewildwoods.com/blog](https://www.preservingthewildwoods.com/blog).

Branding + Politics + Community Engagement = Preservation

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Preservationists' primary recourse is, in effect, to lean on building owners to "do the right thing" for history and posterity. That method of preservation is, at best, inconsistent. Many building owners don't understand how their property contributes to the character of a town and cannot be easily swayed by glorified peer pressure. (This common failure of preservation efforts caused the Wildwoods lose a large chunk of its Doo Wop motel population between 2002 and 2007.) How have successful preservation movements managed to get things done? Most share three key factors: Consistent branding, community participation, and engagement with local politics.

How can the Wildwoods employ these three key elements of preservation movements? In fact, twenty years ago, the Wildwoods nearly succeeded. In the 1990s, the Doo Wop Preservation League was formed to raise awareness of the island's cache of 1950s and 1960s motels, all of which featured classic mid-century neon signs and asymmetrical, wacky shapes. The DWPL did an admirable job of advertising the preservation movement, publicizing the memorable term "doo wop" to link the motels to their 1950s context. Newspapers and magazines all over the country ran stories about the Wildwoods' endangered motels, many including vivid color photos. Inspired by this publicity blast, tourists and architectural aficionados visited the Wildwoods and raised their voices in support of the motels, helping launch a community devoted to the motels' preservation. The DWPL and other interested groups embraced this community, holding conferences and other events to raise awareness of the Wildwoods' historic architecture. While the Doo Wop preservation movement had several success stories, namely the preservation of the Surfside Restaurant and its reuse as the Doo Wop Experience museum, over

We Want Your Opinion!

By Preserving the Wildwoods Editorial Board

We created a survey comparing classic versus new architecture in the Wildwoods. Take the survey now and register your vote on what style of homes you prefer in the Wildwoods. The survey is quick and easy to take. You'll get 10 questions with a picture of an older Wildwoods building compared with a newer building. You just need to click on which building style you prefer.

Take the survey at <https://www.questionpro.com/t/ASmVNZmHlu>.

All your responses will be anonymous and after we collect the data, we'll publish our findings on which type of architecture the public prefers for the Wildwoods.

100 motels were demolished during a condo boom that lasted from about 2002 until the 2008 economic crisis. At the end of the day, the Wildwoods' preservationists held little sway over motels' aging owners, many of whom were enticed by attractive offers to sell out.

Preserving the Wildwoods hopes to go the crucial last step to ensure that the Wildwoods' historic architecture of all styles and eras survives to inspire future generations: We'd like to help integrate preservation with local govern-

ment. We've encountered a lot of resistance to preservation around town: Many building owners say that they don't want to list their buildings on the National Historic Register, for instance, because they believe that a listing on the National Historic Register will prohibit them from making changes to their building, when in reality, a listing would provide them incentives to make changes in a historically sympathetic way. We'd also like to make local government officials more aware of the valuable architecture that

still remains standing in the Wildwoods and the benefits of preserving it, rather than allowing it to be replaced with cookie-cutter condominiums. All great preservation movements require some combination of eye-catching branding, community engagement, and the support of local politics. Previous preservation movements in the Wildwoods have managed to capture the first two of these; Preserving the Wildwoods wants to give the third our best shot!

This is an excerpt of the full story, which is available at preservingthewildwoods.com/blog.



The Wildwoods' Doo Wop Experience is a success of branding and community engagement. Photo courtesy Greater Wildwood Hotel/Motel Association.



Pary Tells It Like It Is

By Pary Lion Tell, PTW Committee Member

Pary Lion Tell grew up in Wildwood and is now head of the Cape History Coalition. These are some of her opinions and observations about redevelopment in the Wildwoods.

A Lack of Sustainability

To make Wildwood a vibrant town, with a sense of community, again, we need to attract year-round residents, including families. In my own case, I wouldn't move back to Wildwood until they address the threat to the city caused by the lack of environmental and economic sustainability. I see with every big storm, that parts of the town that never in the past flooded, are now routinely under water. I don't see any effort by the city government to address this issue, which is made worse by current redevelopment efforts. The most "green" way to redevelop a city is through alternative use of existing buildings, not the tearing down to build new, all look alike, condos that will attract primarily second home owners. This also leads to a "dead" community for 6 or 8 months a year, with no local support for businesses and failure to address the flooding will inhibit property sales.

Ratables Don't Solve Everything

People keep going on about new ratables. My father was the City Comptroller for the City of Wildwood for 32 years. He used to remark that the great revenue stream from new ratables was a fantasy. He often said for every new ratable, there is a corresponding demand for more municipal services, be it police protection, fire protection, trash pickup, or increased school enrollment. New ratables are not a cash cow as many politicians seem to think. New ratables often actually *increase* taxes.

Embracing Our Identity

The pedestrian mall, which was modeled after Cape May's successful mall, failed because the government didn't take into consideration all the factors that contributed to Cape May's success, beginning with a commitment to its history. It began with the Historic Landmark designation, which gave it its identity as a Victorian town.

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The mall then preserved storefront architecture that contributed to that identity, making a place for small boutique type stores and restaurants. Wildwood should have enforced Historic Landmark designation for its Doo Wop architecture and worked to bring that to the mall. It should have also looked for stores that would appeal to tourists instead of local retail businesses. It should have focused on working with the Doo Wop identity, or whatever other historic era they wanted to highlight in addition to Doo Wop. Cape May also built a reputation as a town with good food and nice restaurants, an attraction for families.

What is the Plan?

For a politician to make a blanket statement that no one wants old stuff, they all want new, is pure opinion. I think politicians need to poll residents before making statements like that. The people (voters) should demand to be presented with a complete plan, which seems to be pie in the sky at the present, for the redevelopment of the city, with all costs associated with it that are going to impact their taxes. Instead, it seems like there is no plan and things are being done haphazardly. If I wanted to buy a block on Pacific Avenue and tear it all down and build condos, I would probably get approval. If the town turns into condo town, where will people shop and eat? I know the answer – they'll travel over the bridge to Cape May.

Preserving the Wildwoods Pitches Historic Preservation to the City of Wildwood

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out the many benefits available to communities that establish them such as access to state and federal grants and relief from strict code regulations that can make repairs easier for owners of older homes. Showing that communities all across New Jersey are already having success with historic preservation, Barton provided many examples of new projects that re-used existing historic buildings (adaptive reuse) making both developers and the community happy.

Closing things out was author and Preserving the Wildwoods president Taylor Henry, whose presentation focused on how historic preservation is relevant to Wildwood. She explained how preservation is more than just saving buildings, but is also about building a sense of community through maintenance of older buildings and remembering the legacies of the previous residents. She stressed how the variety of unique buildings gives Wildwood its unique character and it is important for new development to fit in with the existing environment. Taylor pointed out that while many of Wildwood's residents are already informally preserving their historic homes, it is now time for the city to formally adopt historic districts and commissions to help preserve what makes Wildwood special.

Preserving the Wildwoods thanks Preservation New Jersey for donating their time and effort and also thanks the City of Wildwood for allowing us to present our ideas. The recording of the presentation will be available on preservingthewildwoods.com/blog.

As Things Get Transformed

By Randy Senna, Owner, Retro Arcade

Randy Senna is the proprietor of Retro Arcade on the Wildwood Boardwalk. He wrote this piece during the renovations of the former Stewart's Root Beer, near his arcade.

As things get transformed, and what once was, is torn out....

Tossed into the dumpster with no thought of the life they once had...

I look down into the pile of what no one cared about, and my eye catches the clock, which stopped just after 2, when its life ended without love.

It is a symbol of time itself.

Everything has meaning; what we do, and the way we do it, is important.

Nothing seems to matter anymore to most people, as they rip out the old, and change it into something else...

Without respect for what once was, there can be no respect for what it changes into.

Each of us has a clock on our wall...

Our time is limited; what we do, and the way we do it is important.

Uphold old values of pride and dignity, and when the clock stops, don't just throw it in the dumpster, for it represents something quite important.



Photo courtesy Randy Senna.

A generous way to show your support and continue this newsletter is to make a tax-deductible donation!

Two ways to donate:

1. Mail a check to Partners in Preservation, PO Box 2538, Wildwood NJ 08260 (optional: write "Newsletter" in the memo)

or

2. Make a donation or become a friend via PayPal at wildwoodnjhistory.com/donate or

www.partnersinpreservation.net

Thanks for your support!

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Theresa and David Williams, contributors to this issue



Theresa

Thanks for Making Partners in Preservation's Plant Sale a Success!

By Theresa and David Williams

Thank you for supporting Partners in Preservation's annual spring plant sale fundraiser at the Doo Wop Experience in Wildwood. It was a hard year for a sale: They are rebuilding the street with new outflow pipes to drain the island to stop storm flooding. The main pipes are big enough to stand up inside of! But we had more people buying flowers than we expected—many people drove the torn-up street to come and buy our flowers. Next year, we should have a finished and safe street, easy to drive. For sure come to the next Plant and Flower Sale. We want to add beauty and color into your life!

Photo courtesy of Theresa and David Williams



Bring Back the Front Porch

"The porch is one of the few "magical intermediate zones" where people can be partly-in, partly-out, able to feel comfortable on their own turf and comfortable interacting with strangers. It is this space that, more than any other place in the built environment, encourages humans to act like neighbors again." - Steve Mouzon

"Because porch walls are transparent, one can see the street outside, watch cars and joggers go by, say hello to people as they pass. You are not inside working at a desk or cooking in a kitchen; you are out on your porch, in public, interacting with the neighborhood. Your porch, your front yard and even your sidewalk are some of the greatest untapped resources in our neighborhoods. The front porch is where public meets private, where families can socialize with neighbors and friends." - Sebastian Salvadó

Source: Treehugger.com

New Rock Song, Preservationist DJ Inspire Preserving the Wildwoods Playlist

By Taylor Henry, PTW President

Music has been written about preservation as long as people have been fighting for places that matter to them. Pop artists like Carole King, Neil Young, and Don Henley have sung about the upsetting results of what happens when redevelopment goes unchecked and cherished places are lost.

Now there's a new preservationist song from a super-group of musicians that performed with those and more artists. This group, "The Immediate Family," just dropped a new song called "Can't Stop Progress," and legendary Rock DJ Jim Ladd was the first to air it on SiriusXM's Deep Tracks channel.

After debuting the track on his March 25 show, Ladd said a lack of effort to preserve small businesses and historic buildings has bothered him "for a long, long time.

"Progress is always on the move to tear it down and build something new," he said. "Perhaps we need more preservation and a little less progress. I don't know, that's my view. We've got to preserve some of these places that are special to us."

Inspired by the music on Ladd's shows – as well as 2018 place-based playlists by the National Trust for Historic Preservation – our organization has put together its own playlist of songs about preservation. Visit <https://www.preservingthewildwoods.com/blog/> to find a link to the playlist on Spotify.

We would love to hear your suggestions for songs to add to the playlist, so please comment below or email us at preservingthewildwoods@gmail.com with song recommendations.

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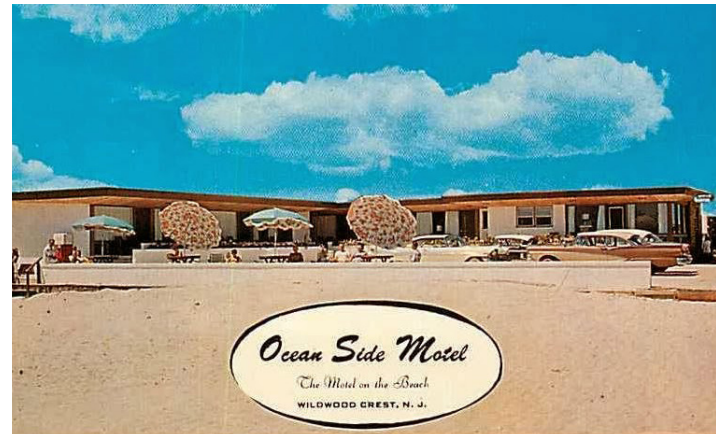
"Partners in Preservation" Facebook group, which focuses on projects like Holly Beach Park, plant sales and holiday house tours

"Wildwoods Preservationists" Facebook group, where we share exclusive news, calls to action, and other important announcements

We Will Stand

A common misconception about preservation in the Wildwoods is that there is nothing left to preserve. It's true that we've lost many historic structures to redevelopment over the years, but there are still hundreds of Victorian and doo-wop buildings left. It's easy to see our history when one looks up and around. The oldest houses on the island are sometimes hidden under modern renovations, but what matters is that they still stand.

Mourning a Loss: The Lampliter Motel in Wildwood Crest is soon falling to the wrecking ball in a rare exception to Wildwood Crest's moratorium on post-Memorial Day demolitions. The Lampliter Motel complex includes the former Ocean Side Motel, one of the earliest motels built in Wildwood Crest (in 1956). Photo courtesy Jackson Betz collection.



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