

# Parkside Preservation

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Parkside Historic Preservation Corp.

James L. Brown IV  
Executive Director  
4220 Parkside Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
215.473.4900

# PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided.

Project Name Parkside Preservation Location Parkside Historic District Philadelphia, PA

Owner Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation with special needs.

Project Use(s) Residence and recreation for low-moderate income individuals & families and persons

Project Size Phase II 198 units; Phase III undetermined Total Development Cost 21 Million so far.

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

Date Initiated 1983 Percent Completed, December 1, 1998 90%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates The Lansdowne, Dec., 1985 The Brantwood, June, 1993  
4200 block Parkside, Mar., 1991 4234 Parkside, Dec. 1994  
The Brentwood, July, 1996

Application submitted by:  
Name James L. Brown, IV Title Executive Director

Organization Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation

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E-mail jbrownv@aol.com

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

Organization	Key Person	Telephone
Public Agencies	Office of Housing and Community Development	John Kromer (215) 686-9750

Architect/Designer Campbell Thomas & Co. Robert Thomas (215)985-4354

Developer Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation James L. Brown, IV (215)473-4900

Professional Consultant Edmund Bacon Former city planner, City of Philadelphia (215) 567-0693

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Community Group Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Circle all that apply).

Direct Mailing	Magazine Announcement (please specify)	Previous RBA entrant or Selection Committee member	Other (please specify)
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Signature James L. Brown, IV Executive Director

## ABSTRACT

Project Name: **Parkside Preservation**

Location: Currently the blocks fronted by 4100 and 4200 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.

### 1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major goals.

In the late 1800s, the elite of Philadelphia's nouveau riche lived in magnificent mansions and townhouses facing the nation's largest urban park. With Pompeian brick, relief sculptures, copper trim, granite pillars and sweeping porches, the buildings offered Victorian grandeur unequalled in this city of remarkable architecture. Eighty years later, after a demographic shift from the white wealthy to the African-American poor, the buildings lay in waste, boarded up, home to only the homeless, crack addicts and scavengers, just part of blocks and blocks of urban decay. In 1983, James L. Brown IV, a neighborhood resident for decades, formed the nonprofit Parkside Historic Preservation Corp., obtained a national historical designation for the area, took over property from the city and began the laborious process of obtaining funding to rehabilitate two blocks. Now the buildings, restored to their former splendor, house a neighborhood cross-section that ranges from the poverty stricken to the lower-middle class, from the elderly to the very young. The apartments also serve those with special needs.

The restoration phase began with a 19-unit apartment building, moved on to two neighboring houses and then branched out to the mansions overlooking the site of the first World's Fair. The first mansion became home to 18 female substance abusers and their children under the care of the Philadelphia Health Management Corp. The next stage, the Brentwood Apartments — three twin mansions joined by a common porch — became home to 43 tenants, more than half of them elderly and many of the others with children. As the nonprofit corporation began restoring a third mansion, the scope of the project broadened to include more than two dozen homes on two smaller streets. So far, 13 buildings have been rehabilitated and a 14<sup>th</sup> will be finished next year. The project, encompassing 198 apartment units and an award-winning garden, has cost \$21 million. The next major stage will involve construction of a seven-lot building designed to meet the health agency's growing needs and to provide a day-care center for the entire community. After completion of the two-square-block area, Parkside Historic Preservation will move farther into the historic district, razing whole blocks of dilapidated row houses with little historic value and building homes for sale.

One goal we share with many urban developers — to arrest a neighborhood's deterioration. But our goals go further. We want to provide a standard of housing not normally available to the poor, and we want to bring historic preservation into an area not ordinarily desirable to developers. Above all, we do not want to change the socioeconomic or ethnic composition of the area. The project has won awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Philadelphia chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

### 2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*?

Unlike many restoration projects of this quality and scale, the Parkside restoration was not designed to "gentrify" an area but to give low- and middle-income residents homes normally out of their reach, homes equivalent to apartments in the city's finest areas. Not a single person was displaced during any renovation. The project was designed to accommodate single mothers needing child care, the elderly needing security and the handicapped needing accessibility. The formation of a nonprofit organization, Parkside Historic Preservation, allowed the community to become involved through board representatives in the entire process, from helping to plan the restoration to approving tenants. The community participation and the developer's longtime residency in the area lend legitimacy to the project in the neighbors' eyes, building a respect seen in big ways and small — men keep an eye on the buildings at night, neighbors hail the developer as a beloved brother, and graffiti writers keep their looping letters off Parkside buildings. In this area of high unemployment and deep poverty, construction crews have employed about 50 neighborhood residents and many summer interns from city high schools. One tenant, Philadelphia Health Management Corp., brought 20 permanent jobs to the area. Another agency undertook the first new construction in the neighborhood in four decades, building a 20-unit building for mentally handicapped tenants on land provided by Parkside Historic Preservation.

None of this could have been possible without financial innovations, innovations that gave the preservation corporation enough capital to undertake a restoration true to even the most minute detail of the elaborate Victorian facades. The first step was formation of Parkside Historic Preservation Corp., a minority-run nonprofit organization that serves both as developer and property manager. Next came declaration of the area as a national historic district, providing key tax incentives for private investors. The next part of the "double-whammy" tax incentive came from the use of the low-income housing credit. The corporation also devised a way to buy out investors when their assets no longer have any paper value. With these incentives, the organization has been able to attract two-thirds of the projects' costs from private sources. The remainder has come from outright grants and community development block grants administered by the city, which has allowed the developer far more flexibility than normal. For one project, the Brentwood Apartments, city officials had such confidence and belief in the project that they waived the usual grant limit of \$1.5 million, giving the developer \$2 million.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## **1. What local issues did this project address? How has it affected the local community?**

The project addresses the deterioration of the neighborhood and the deterioration of the spirit that comes with blight. As the hulking ruins began taking on the form of the Victorian grandeur of the early 1900s, the confidence of neighborhood residents grew. They formed a community committee to push for improvements outside the Parkview reconstruction area, calling for more recreational facilities, safer streets and better trash pickup. The enthusiasm continues to grow.

The project also addresses the need for high-quality housing to serve a diverse population already in the neighborhood, from the elderly to the children to those with special needs, from women needing subsidies to workers able to pay market rates. The restoration, done to exacting specifications, allows lower-income residents to enjoy apartments usually found only in a city's wealthy neighborhoods.

With the project came sorely needed jobs. During the course of the project, 50 neighborhood residents have found work with the construction crews. The tenant of one mansion, the Philadelphia Health Management Corp., has brought 20 permanent jobs into the neighborhood.

## **2. Describe the design concept, materials used, and visual impact of the project. How was the design shaped and influenced by its intended use? Its urban context?**

The design concept encompasses two goals: faithful restoration of the Victorian facades, down to the bas-relief, and a complete overhaul of the interiors to accommodate a variety of tenants. To restore the homes, craftsmen developed techniques to reproduce the bas-relief in fiberglass, and they reproduced the elaborate copper work in wood, using light green paint to imitate a copper patina. The goal of accommodating a variety of tenants produced a different set of problems. The first two floors of the 43-unit Brentwood were designed essentially as townhouses for families. The top three floors house apartments for the elderly. In another situation, an apartment house was designed for the physically handicapped.

## **3. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant tradeoffs were required to implement the project?**

Arresting the neighborhood's deterioration stands as the most obvious impetus for the project. But Parkside Historic Preservation Corp. wanted to turn around the area with methods and materials used in the finest restorations in the country's oldest cities, giving low-income residents the type of homes rarely available to them. Doing this meant ignoring conventional wisdom about the foolishness of tackling expensive historical restoration in low-income areas, and it meant selling the vision to private investors and city officials.

Above all, the corporation did not want to change the socioeconomic or ethnic composition of the area. The project was designed for young and old and those with special needs, many already living within the district. Residents range from those on subsidies to those able to pay market rates.

The corporation never employed any tradeoffs, not even when three mansions burned and part of one collapsed during renovation into an apartment house.

## **4. Describe key elements of the development process, including community participation, where appropriate.**

The first step in the development — and financial — process involved forming the nonprofit, minority-run Parkside Historic Preservation Corp. and receiving the designation of a national historic district for the area. City officials expressed eagerness to see the area reborn and sold the corporation two mansions for \$1. As the development began, a need for a neighborhood presence on the board became clear, and the district residents gained a voice that continues to shape the rehabilitation project today. The corporation serves as developer and manager, working toward making the investment self-sustaining.

**5. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources, and square foot costs where applicable.**

The project developer, James L. Brown IV, knew from the beginning the expense of restoring the elaborate Victorian mansions at \$140 a square foot would be too great to rely heavily on public subsidies. Winning a national historic designation for the area gave Parkside Preservation an attractive tax incentive to add to the deductions available for financing low-income housing, allowing the group to draw two-thirds of the financing from corporate investors that included National Equity Fund, Edison Capital, Duquesne Power and Light and Penrose Property Inc. To make the investment even more attractive, the corporation devised a plan to buy out investors when the asset no longer carried any paper value, allowing them to donate the property to the corporation for an attractive tax deduction. The board just approved the first buyout, and it will allow Parkside Preservation to refinance the property and to capitalize the project. The ultimate goal is for the buildings to become self-sustaining and in the nonprofit organization's hands.

A small portion of the financing came from outright grants. The remainder came from community development block grants. In one case, the elaborate restoration of apartments that had burned, the city extended the maximum on subsidies by 30 percent, giving Parkside \$2 million in CDB grants.

**6. Describe what is unique about the project. Is it adaptable to other urban settings?**

The project is unusual in a physical sense and in an emotional sense. Few developers have ever attempted, let alone succeeded, in complicated historical rehabilitation for lower-income housing in a distressed neighborhood littered with abandoned houses. But the remarkable aspect of the project goes far beyond the restoration of mansions to their Victorian grandeur. It lies in rebuilding an entire urban neighborhood, repairing its historic fabric while providing opportunity for the residents. Just seeing the faith needed to attempt the project imbued the area with a sense of hope, and that sense has built as the project has progressed.

Developers with perseverance and a sense of mission can adapt the lessons learned in Parkside to other urban settings with crumbling historical homes in low-income neighborhoods.

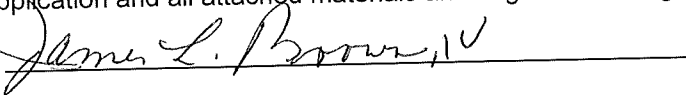
# DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

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### **1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?**

I formed the nonprofit, minority-run organization in 1983, and from that time on the group and I have been involved in every aspect of the project, from obtaining funding to hiring contractors to formulating new directions for the project to take.

### **2. What, if any, modifications were made to the original proposal as the project was developed? What tradeoffs or compromises were required during the development of the project?**

The restoration project originally involved only the Victorian mansions, townhouses, and apartments along the 4100 and 4200 blocks of Parkside, all facing Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park. After we completed three major projects, and investors had concrete evidence of the quality involved in the rehabilitation, the board expanded the project to two dozen smaller Victorian houses lining two side streets feeding into Parkside. Although we have only begun working on the side streets, our scope again has shifted, this time to include the entire historic district. Once we finish the two-square-block Parkside area, our mission will change from rehabilitation of rental units to construction of sale houses. We plan to demolish entire blocks of crumbling, historically insignificant homes and rebuild.

### **3. What, if any, innovative means of financing the project were used?**

The expense of restoring elaborate Victorian mansions made relying on public subsidies for the bulk of the financing impossible. We devised a "double-whammy" package of tax breaks for corporate investors — one deduction for rehabilitation in national historic districts and another for developing low-income housing. Because we are a nonprofit organization, we could give investors another vehicle to use when their assets no longer carry paper value; they can donate the property to Parkside Preservation and take another hefty deduction. Parkside then can take out a new mortgage on the property, giving the group even more capital. These tactics have allowed us to finance two-thirds of the project through corporate investors. The ultimate goal is for the buildings to become self-sustaining and in the nonprofit organization's hands.

A small portion of the financing came from outright grants. The remainder came from community development block grants. In one case, the elaborate restoration of apartments that had burned, the city extended the maximum on subsidies by 30 percent, giving Parkside \$2 million in community development block grants.

### **4. How did the financial benefits and economic impacts of this project differ from other projects? How does the project's quality relate to the financial goals?**

Financial benefits and economic impacts of the project are long-term goals that we have every expectation of realizing within a decade. We have employed dozens of workers, and we already have seen a slight economic impact — several businesses have spruced up their facades. Within five years, we expect to see a grocery store and a drug store locate in the area and perhaps even smaller businesses, creating more jobs for our residents. At the same time, through a partnership with the nearby Philadelphia Zoo, we hope to create a destination point for families near the zoo, with open park areas, shopping and restaurants. The financial benefits will come when the nonprofit organization has received several properties through investors' donations, giving us a means to finance reconstruction of the interior without heavily relying on limited partners, keeping the sale prices as low as possible.

The financial goals might take longer to reach than in many cases because the high quality of restoration forced us to borrow more money than many low-income housing projects need.

**5. What was the most difficult task in the development of this project? What was the least successful aspect? With hindsight, would you do anything differently?**

The most difficult aspect of the project, and a task that continues to present difficulty, is assembling the financing for each piece of the project. Although easier now that investors have concrete evidence of our dedication to preservation and property management, it still presents time-consuming problems because of the numerous agencies and corporations involved, each with its own requirements. Competition for this money — private and public — is fierce. We are in the process of exploring tax-exempt financing to eliminate some of the cumbersome procedures.

The least successful aspect, in hindsight, was agreeing to rent our first rehabilitated mansion to the Philadelphia Health Management Corp. to serve 18 substance abusers and their children. PHMC came to us just as we were completing the building, and we thought we needed to take advantage of the opportunity. But the group needed facilities — a day care center, a large meeting room — that the Brantwood could not offer. In the end, this turned out to be a blessing. PHMC officials recently decided they needed a new home in West Philadelphia and asked us to construct a seven-lot building to accommodate the group. In the new building, PHMC will sponsor a day care for the entire community and also offer general health care to the residents. The PHMC building will complete the reconstruction of the 4100 and 4200 blocks of Parkside Avenue, and it will open up the group's old building to 18 lower- and middle-income tenants.

**6. What about this project would be instructive to other developers?**

Even if conventional wisdom deems the project impossible, explore every option to make it economically feasible, from formation of a nonprofit corporation to obtaining a historical declaration. Obtain expert help to unearth every tool possible, the obvious and the arcane. And be prepared to be persistent and to summon the patience of Job.

**7. If, five years from now, you were to judge that this project was still successful, what characteristics would convince you of that fact?**

I would see the entire two-square-block Parkside area rehabilitated, and working people comprising the bulk of population. We would be in the first stage of building houses for sale in the district's interior, bringing more middle-class residents into the neighborhood. And through our partnership with the Philadelphia Zoo, the regional rail company or Amtrak would put a new train stop in the area, bringing families here for the day and giving neighborhood residents easier access to jobs outside the area.

# ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name: Robert P. Thomas, AIA Title: Partner

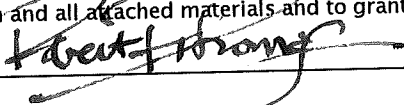
Organization: Campbell Thomas & Co. Architects Telephone: 215-985-4354 (Direct Line)

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Signature



1. Describe the design of the project including design concept, choice of materials, scale, etc.

*When Campbell Thomas & Co. Architects' plans for Parkside were reviewed in 1995, the Pa. Historical & Museum Commission noted: "This proposal is particularly remarkable in that the developer is taking on existing physical and structural conditions that are among the worst seen in any Investment Tax Credit project in Pennsylvania, if not nationwide." Thus, we actually designed a new structure and roof within the repair of the historic walls.*

*As architects we have not only had to follow the rigorous Secretary of Interior Standards for Historic Structures, but to engage as well in services we may never perform again. For example, when the Brentwood suffered a serious fire, I was awakened at 2am by Jim Brown, and was on site at 6am. Working with a team including a fire lieutenant and the demolition contractor's crane operator, we spent the entire day on the roof of an adjacent building, directing the use of the crane in such a way that the fire department was satisfied smoldering material was removed, while protecting critical historic brickwork from undue demolition. Later that fall, Jim Brown called me on Thanksgiving morning following the destruction of the east wall of the Brentwood the night before. We, Jim and the contractor's staff were on site on Thanksgiving assuring the projection of the building, and immediately revising our strategy for its rehabilitation.*

*Similarly, extensive vandalism and theft over the years left us with none of the elaborate brownstone panels with their extensive bas-relief sculpture. We worked with a sculptor to reproduce these panels in fiberglass. Much of the elaborate copperwork had been stolen; we designed its reproduction in wood, painted copper's light-green patina color. All these unusual approaches were blessed by the three historic agencies reviewing the project.*

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

*Parkside was constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century as one of the City's most prestigious neighborhoods. Its ornate five story German Renaissance structures line the southern border of Fairmount Park where they are seen by thousands of Philadelphians every day. Yet, disinvestment and suburban development following World War II saw Parkside become a physically devastated, largely African-American neighborhood. The once elegant buildings lining Fairmount Park, became ruins and a symbol of the destruction of much of Philadelphia, appearing in several publications.*

*The overall plan for Parkside design has addressed the need to reinvent block after block of abandoned mansions as affordable housing for neighborhood residents, and others in the city wishing to return to Parkside. The housing types developed range from one-bedroom apartments for the elderly to congregate housing for people with AIDS, to 3 bedroom flats for families.*

*Of course, these varied programmatic functions required a unique approach to the design. For example, the 43 unit Brentwood has ten family units on the first and second floor, all of which have their own outside entrance from either the street, or the front porch. Above, on the third through fifth floors are thirty-three apartments for the elderly, reached via elevator from a ground floor apartment entrance and commons area. In essence there is a three-story apartment building atop town homes, providing for a mix of population which allows for a good balance of community and privacy.*



3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design tradeoffs or compromises required to complete the project.

*The architectural planning and design of the Parkside project required extraordinary patience, and the successful resolution of a continuing series of conflicting interests, codes, deadlines, and regulatory and financial requirements. Without the "partnering" of the developer and general contractor from the inception of the project, it probably could not have been completed.*

*From the inception of the project, and its multiple phases, we were aware that as architects, we would have to meet not only the building code requirements, which no longer permit the construction of the particular type of 5-story structure found in Parkside, but also the requirements, review and timetables of other City agencies—the Redevelopment Authority, the Office of Housing and Community Development, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission, of state agencies—Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, as well as Federal agencies—the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. National Park Service.*

*We have successfully resolved apparent conflict between historic preservation and accessibility goals, between the number of apartments required for financial reasons and agency requirements for minimum unit sizes, and the need to meet tax credit deadlines of one agency while holding up critical construction work while awaiting review of another. Keeping our work, and that of the contractor moving required careful diplomacy, as well as the willingness to change specifications on such critical items as the building's windows. In that regard, the need to have windows installed by the date required by the IRS led to a tradeoff in the window selected to preserve the buildings' tax credits.*

*Similarly, even though we had obtained design approval from the City's building department, and all three historical agencies involved in reviewing our unit designs, we were compelled to make changes in apartment designs to satisfy one of the funding sources. The presence of all the other deadlines did not give us the opportunity to effect what we thought to be the best unit designs in all cases.*

*Nevertheless, the developers' and contractor's commitment to the project, the fact we had all worked together for many years, and our mutual understanding of an almost impossible process for producing the highest quality project which has resulted, have made this project a success.*

4. Describe the strengths of the project's design and architecture, and the way in which it relates to its urban context.

*The Parkside Historic District lines the southern border of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, extending east to the Philadelphia Zoo (the oldest zoological garden in the nation), and is passed by thousands of transit riders and motorists every day on Parkside Avenue and the Concourse Drives which link the city with the nearby suburbs.*

*Thus, these large, ornate, and unusual German Renaissance structures serve as a beacon not only to the neighborhood, but to the Philadelphia population at large. As such, their rebirth through the effort of the Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation, has rekindled interest in the Parkside neighborhood at large, and will continue to do so at an ever-increasing pace.*

*For the people living in these buildings, there are magnificent views of the apparently unending forest of Fairmount Park. Residents of smaller homes to the south of Parkside Avenue pass the magnificent mansions as they alight from the bus, or drive into the neighborhood. The positive effects have extended to the rehabilitation of some of the nearby commercial buildings at 40<sup>th</sup> Street and Parkside Avenue.*

*The repair and reconstruction of so many units of housing has led to an obvious increase in population, many of whom rely on public transportation. The Parkside Historic Preservation Corporation, in partnership with the Zoological Society of Philadelphia has been planning for the reopening of a commuter rail station at the east end of Parkside, just at the main entrance to the Zoo. Five commuter rail lines go by this point; the original station was closed many years ago. The new station will not only bring many visitors to the Zoo, Fairmount Park and Parkside by train, but will give easier access to the entire region for Parkside's residents.*

# PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

Name: John Kromer

Title: Director of Housing and Community Development

Organization: The City of Philadelphia

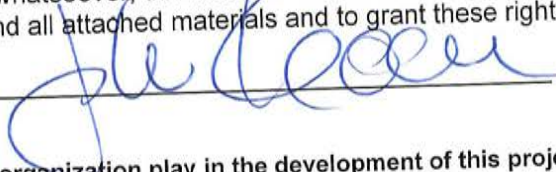
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**1. What role did your organization play in the development of this project?**

The Office of Housing and Community Development provided financing through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

**2. Describe what requirements were made of this project by your agency.**

In deciding on CDBG grants, we look for important values to the city. With Parkside, the value of restoring a historical landmark was clear, but the project had aspects that were even more vital to Philadelphia. The most important to us was Jim Brown's pioneering approach to integrating special-needs tenants — those with mental and physical handicaps and women with substance-abuse problems — with mainstream residents. His trailblazing in this area and his dedication gave us an important model for the implementation of a progressive special-needs policy. In addition, by preserving the houses, the project created a buffer between the avenue, Fairmount Park and the low-rise community behind Parkside. Without the buffer — if the mansions had been torn down or allowed to crumble — the low-rise blocks behind the Brentwood would have been exposed, giving vandals and criminals easier access to the homes.

The project also needed to meet underwriting criteria applied to all ventures through an evaluation of project elements such as construction schedule, overall development budget, architect fees, and design standards. Because this venture provided multiple benefits, we were willing to waive some standard underwriting requirements. For the Brentwood Apartments project, we waived the maximum subsidy allowed, giving him \$2 million, 30 percent more than we usually approve.

**3. From your perspective, how was this project intended to benefit the urban environment? Describe how, if at all these intentions changed over the course of the project. What tradeoffs and compromises were required? How did you participate in making them? With hindsight, what would you do different?**

The project restored a magnificent stretch of houses visible from one of Philadelphia's most popular attractions, Fairmount Park, which includes the zoo, historic homes, a river known internationally for rowing events and the site of the 1876 centennial, Memorial Hall. The project also is providing a cornerstone for the improvement of the entire area. But from the view of the city's housing department, the social diversity and integration the project fosters stand as the most important elements. The Parkside Avenue restoration is a great example of a creative approach to neighborhood reinvestment.

The original intentions of the city with regard to this venture have never changed, and I know of no tradeoffs or compromises that needed to occur. Jim Brown's past track record brought a consistency to the project.

**4. Describe any data you have that document the impact that this project has had on its surroundings and the people in the project area.**

In a community like Parkside, you don't see the immediate spin-off that construction of a major downtown hotel would create. Inner-cities have been losing jobs, businesses and population for decades. Not even an extraordinary project like the Parkside restoration will turn this around immediately. But having these highly visible buildings sends an encouraging message to the residents and anyone interested in urban renewal — there are solutions to urban problems.

**5. What about this project would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?**

This project provides a valuable lesson to any city like Philadelphia with old housing stock that is expensive to demolish: You need to weigh carefully the high cost against values not easily quantified but supremely important. No corners can be cut when undertaking a project like the Brentwood Apartments; you must spend top dollar for the high quality needed to last through the years. But in the end cities have no choice but to decide that spending money on the restoration of our neighborhoods makes as much sense as financing a sports stadium. Our neighborhoods are as much a part of the city fabric as our football team.

**6. If, five years from now, you were to judge that this project was still successful, what characteristics would convince you of that fact?**

I would see well-maintained, attractive buildings in the same conditions they now exist. And I expect to see that because Parkside Historic Preservation has created a structure for sustaining development over a period of years, unlike the federal housing project programs. I also believe the momentum will continue with development on the interior blocks.

# PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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Organization: Philadelphia Historical Commission

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Richard Tyler*

**1. What role did your organization play in the development of this project.**

The Philadelphia Historical Commission staff evaluated the plans and specifications for the Parkside development as part of its responsibility to conduct the reviews prescribed by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, for federally assisted undertakings.

**2. Describe what requirements were made of this project by your agency.**

The commission employed *the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* in its assessment of Parkside and encountered no problems in its application of these guidelines.

**3. From your perspective, how was this project intended to benefit the urban environment? Describe how, if at all, these intentions changed over the course of the project. What tradeoffs and compromises were required? How did you participate in making them? With hindsight, what would you do different?**

Before the renovation, Parkside presented a repellent urban image to anyone using Fairmount Park or passing through Parkside and an even more depressing image for anyone living in the area. First and foremost, the project has dramatically improved the conditions of those living in the restoration area and promises to improve the living conditions of many others in the historic district. The restoration also presents a radically improved image of the Parkside community to anyone using Fairmount Park.

I know of no change in the intention of the project or of any tradeoffs or compromises, even though the federal regulations often lead other developers to complain bitterly. Jim Brown and the others at Parkside Historic Preservation persevered, doing anything needed to accomplish their goals.

**4. Describe any data you have that document the impact that this project has had on its surroundings and the people in the project area.**

**5. What about this project would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?**

If you have a determined developer with a commitment to a community and the wisdom to bring in sensitive consultants, a developer who won't let go in the face of adversity, you can restore buildings that contribute significantly to a city streetscape, even if the restoration looks impossible and uneconomic from the perspective of conventional wisdom.

**6. If, five years from now, you were to judge that this project was still successful, what characteristics would convince you of that fact?**

I would see people living in well-maintained buildings, maintained not just by Parkside but by the residents. I would see, and feel, the residents' deep sense of pride in their neighborhood.

# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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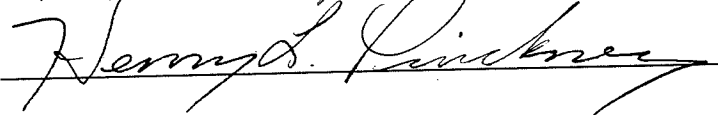
Title: Pastor and board member of Parkside Historic Preservation  
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Signature: (The Rev. Joseph Ginyard)



Signature: (The Rev. Henry L. Pinkney)



## 1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

We both became involved about six years ago through our churches, about a block from the renovated Parkside area. Our involvement rests with our responsibilities as board members of Parkside Historic Preservation — to oversee the projects, to review plans, to make recommendations — but it also rests with our role as neighborhood spokesmen and guardians of the residents' well-being. In each case, we concentrate on the spiritual and moral needs of the community and the improvements that will lift the neighbors' hopes.

## 2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

One of the major issues was the decaying condition of the neighborhood and the despair created by a lack of action to stem the deterioration. When the buildings were abandoned, the people felt abandoned. Parkside Historic Preservation has allowed people to see hope, and from this hope has arisen a unity and a sense of empowerment throughout the neighborhood. Another major issue in the neighborhood is unemployment, and through Parkside we have created about 50 jobs during the course of the project and 20 more in the health field.

## 3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project?

No tradeoffs or compromises were required. We see only positive developments.

## 4. How has this project made the community a better place to live? Why should it win this Award?

The project has opened high-quality housing to people already living in the neighborhood, giving them an opportunity to experience the type of home normally not available to low-income people. But it has affected everyone in the neighborhood, not just the Parkside residents, by changing an atmosphere of negativity to a sense of hope. Because of the influence of Parkside, we began holding community meetings once a month for the homeowners, giving them a voice for the first time. They feel empowered instead of hopeless, and we're all working for common goals. Even we were amazed by the vitality we found when these people became involved.

## 5. If a community group came to you for advice in carrying out a similar project, what would you tell them?

Many of our community groups fail because we neglect to assemble a board of experts to guide us through these complicated projects. You need an experienced developer, a lawyer and an accountant. No one person can do it all. You also need a community consensus, a sense of team, to spread the enthusiasm throughout the neighborhood.

6. If, five years from now, you were to judge that this project was still successful, what characteristics would convince you of that fact?

Anyone who saw Parkside six years ago and then saw it today knows that most folks would consider the rehabilitation of the mansions the highlight. For many of us, though, success will come when the rehabilitation project moves into the interior of the district, ridding the area of abandoned, boarded buildings. Success also will be measured in terms of the diversity of the neighborhood on every level — economic, social, age, and ethnic.

# OTHER PERSPECTIVE

Name: Edmund Bacon

Title: Urban planner; former executive director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Organization:

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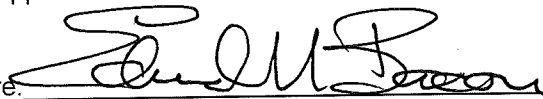
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**1. What role did you play in the development of this project?**

I'm a longtime supporter of the project and of Jim Brown, and I've encouraged him in every way possible. The future of our cities rests with visionaries, and Jim Brown is a visionary. In a film series I directed for the Urban Land Institute, I call him a prophet of the future, ranking him with Queen Marie de Medici, King Louis XIV, John Nash and Pierre Charles L'Enfant.

**2. From your perspective, how was this project intended to benefit the urban environment?**

This project demonstrates that splendid historical structures, which might be judged obsolete and worthless under normal economies, can be rehabilitated and returned to their full glory, giving them irreplaceable value. Through the renovation, Jim Brown gave a whole new standard to a whole part of the city; he created an atmosphere of celebration of the beautiful structures and the beautiful park they face.

The high-quality, complicated renovation done on Parkside generally is associated with only the very wealthy. Jim overcame immense problems to make it work socially and economically in a low-income neighborhood, an extraordinary demonstration to anyone everywhere.

**3. Describe the impact that this project has actually had on its surroundings and on the people in the project area.**

The immediate impact is obvious: Victorian buildings on the verge of ruin have been restored to the last detail: each sculpture, each cherub, each flower renewed or reproduced. The original construction was so complicated and expensive that obtaining public and private funds for this level of rehabilitation on low-income housing is nothing short of extraordinary. But the greatest impact will come when Jim realizes his ultimate objective — ridding the entire neighborhood of abandoned houses. When he finishes that phase, he will prove to the nation that a way does exist to save our cities.

**4. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project?**

Jim did not make a single trade-off or compromise. I believe most white businessmen, or anyone without an emotional attachment to the neighborhood, would have looked for tradeoffs because of the difficulty of the project. Jim never lowered his extraordinarily high standards, not even when three twin mansions caught fire and one wing collapsed, forcing him to start almost from scratch on the Brentwood Apartments.

**5. What was the least successful aspect of the project? With hindsight, what would you do differently?**

I can think of no aspect of this project that has not been a complete success. The ultimate success will come when Jim rids the entire area of blight, giving the nation a desperately needed example of someone with the courage and innovation to eliminate all the vacant properties in an inner-city neighborhood.

6. If, five years from now, you were to judge that this project was still successful, what characteristics would convince you of that fact?

Anyone who saw Parkside six years ago and then saw it today knows that most folks would consider the rehabilitation of the mansions the highlight. For many of us, though, success will come when the rehabilitation project moves into the interior of the district, ridding the area of abandoned, boarded buildings. Success also will be measured in terms of the diversity of the neighborhood on every level — economic, social, age, and ethnic.