

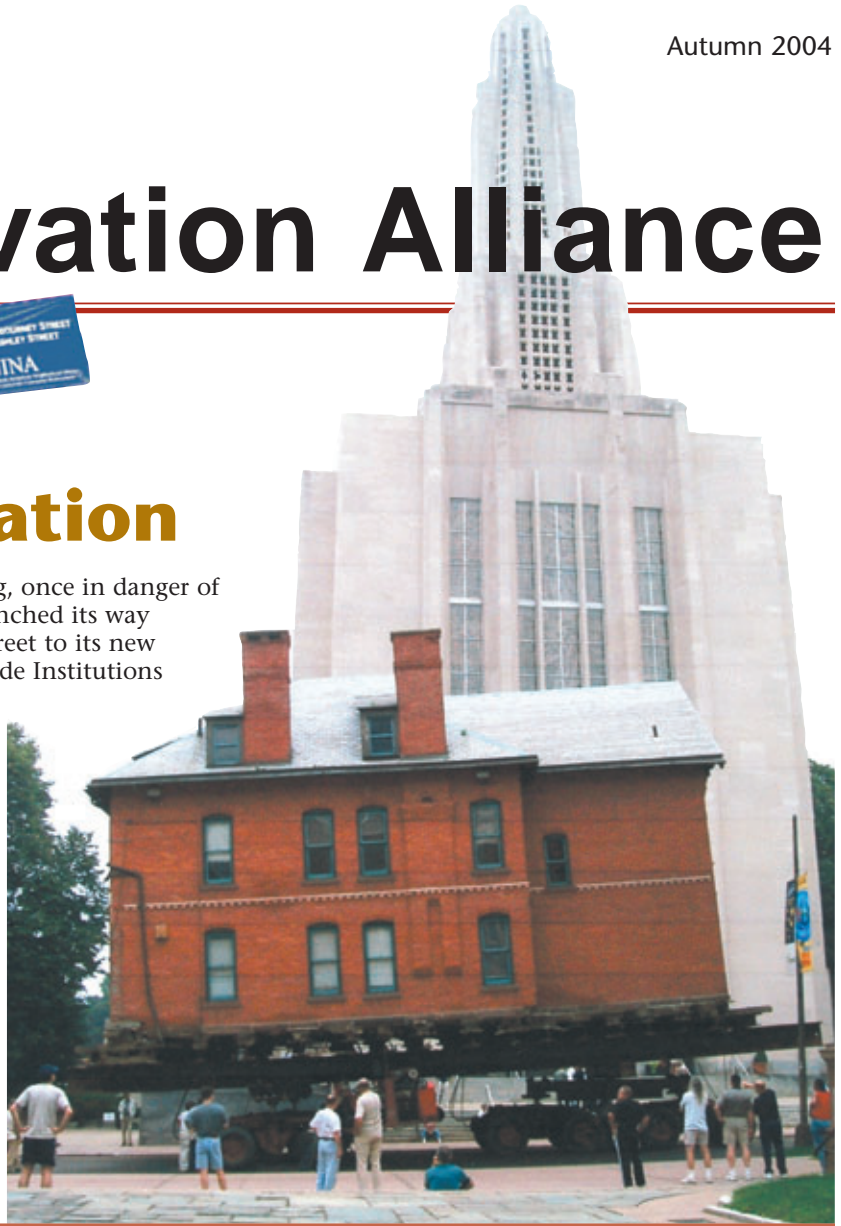


# Hartford Preservation Alliance



## 47 Sigourney Street Relocation

**O**n July 18, this 1890 Victorian brick building, once in danger of being demolished by Aetna for parking, inched its way down Farmington Avenue and Garden Street to its new home at 21 Ashley Street in Asylum Hill. The Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA), which sponsored the move, created a full-scale celebration, including a party on the 22nd floor of The Hartford building with a bird's-eye view of the move, catered by the new Mississippi Grille. The move drew extensive press coverage, as well as turning into a neighborhood event, with crowds watching at street level much like a parade and a block party on Ashley Street to welcome the building. Special thanks go to Ken Johnson, executive director of NINA, for playing an especially important role in preserving the building and preventing its demolition. Once installed at its new location, the building will be returned to its original residential use and sold as a single-family home. 🌸



*The Victorian Lady passes Saint Joseph Cathedral on Farmington Avenue during the move from her former location at 47 Sigourney Street to her new home at 21 Ashley Street.*  
Photo: Deane G. Keller

## Fourth Annual Jeffery S. Czopor Preservation Week Awards



**O**n May 11, more than 75 people attended the Fourth Annual Jeffery S. Czopor Preservation Week Awards ceremony held at the historic South Congregational Church on Main Street. Thirteen awards were presented to individuals and organizations who have made a significant contribution to historic and architectural preservation during the past year. Jack Shannahan, former director of the Connecticut Historical Commission, was the presenter. The awards — sponsored by Friends of Preservation Week and HPA — are named for Jeffery S. Czopor (1973-2001), an energetic and creative urban planner who was one of the founders of HPA. 🌸

*Please see list of awardees with photos beginning on page 4.*

*Hortense Ross accepts an award at the 2004 Jeffery S. Czopor Preservation Week Awards ceremony, while her sister, Precious, looks on.*  
Photo: Laura Stone

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**Printing courtesy of**

Advest Group, Inc.

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the  
Hartford Preservation Alliance  
is to preserve and revitalize  
Hartford's unique architectural heritage  
and neighborhood character.

# Preservation Ordinance Update to Receive Public Hearing

On September 13, the proposed Hartford historic preservation ordinance took its first step toward becoming law when Mayor Eddie Perez formally submitted an ordinance proposal to the Hartford City Council. The Council scheduled a public hearing on the proposal for the evening of September 20.

Last fall, the Council adopted a resolution sponsored by Councilman Bob Painter which directed Chief Operating Officer Lee Erdmann to draft a historic preservation ordinance. Erdmann appointed a task force, chaired by former HPA president Greg Secord, to do the drafting. The task force completed its work in June, and its proposal is now before the Council.

It is anticipated that, after the public hearing, the proposed ordinance will be referred to a Council committee for review and further action, after which it will be returned to the full Council for a final vote. Councilman Painter, who was a member of the task force, is expected to play a lead role on behalf of the ordinance. Mayor Perez has publicly endorsed the concept of a preservation ordinance.

The proposed ordinance provides for demolition and design controls in National and State Register historic districts. It does not cover local historic districts, which are already subject to a different local ordinance, nor does it create any new historic districts. Review would apply only to proposed demolition, new construction, and alterations which both require a building permit and are visible from the street (i.e., it would apply only to exterior renovations). Review would be by a new entity called the Historic Preservation Commission, but its membership would be identical to the city's existing Historic Properties Commission, which presently exercises these powers in the city's two local historic districts — Columbia St. and Grandview Terrace. Staff support would come from the city's new Development Services Department.

The ordinance was carefully drafted by the task force with a recognition that preservation in Hartford must be flexible. The ordinance specifically requires the Commission to consider economic feasibility and directs it to be flexible in its consideration of building materials and design. It also requires the Commission, within one year of the passage of the ordinance, to develop Hartford-specific guidelines and standards and to adopt a Hartford-specific design manual. In the interim, the Commission will follow national standards. ✨

**What can you do?**

If you would like a copy of the proposed ordinance, contact Rafie Podolsky at rpodolsky@hartfordpreservation.org.

If you would like to advocate for the ordinance, you can:

- Write a letter to the editor of the *Hartford Courant*
- Write or call members of the Hartford City Council
- Become a member of HPA and provide us with your email address — we will keep you notified of developments by email

Special thanks to **Advest**  
for its generosity in printing this newsletter.

## 410 Asylum Street Update

In accordance with the agreement which settled *Connecticut Historical Commission v. 410 Asylum Street, LLC*, HPA arranged for the introduction of an ordinance to designate the Capitol Building at 410 Asylum Street as a local historic property. A study of the historic and architectural importance of the building, as authorized by the Hartford City Council, has already been prepared by architectural historian David Ransom. The Historic Properties Commission must next conduct a public hearing, after which it can recommend historic property status to the City Council. The City Council can then act to make the building a "local historic property" by adopting an ordinance. Local historic properties are subject to the jurisdiction of the Historic Properties Commission and cannot be demolished without the Commission's approval.



# HPA Organizes Walking Tour of Asylum Hill

by Stephanie Woodlock

On May 15 of this year, Hartford Preservation Alliance President Matt Blood led an architectural walking tour of Asylum Hill as part of Hartford's Preservation Week celebration. About thirty people toured this neighborhood on foot, visiting old favorite buildings and discovering new gems. Some of us are residents, past and present, some of us are city lovers, some just came for the architecture, and all of us were rewarded.

The Asylum Hill neighborhood is incredibly diverse in terms of architecture, land use, and inhabitants. It didn't start out that way. Until the second half of the 19th century, it was mostly farmland. At that time, the wealthy were moving out of the center of the city in search of space, clean air, and picturesque vistas, all of which could be found in the Asylum Hill of that time along the banks of the Park River and on the newly designed streets and avenues.

Matt showed us the fairly intact traces of this first development to be found at Nook Farm on Forest Street where Samuel Clemens lived during his most productive years. Nearby are the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, the Day-Chamberlin House, and the Charles Boardman Smith House, all classical High Victorian houses. The Harriet Beecher Stowe House and the Stowe Day House are both open to the public. Visiting them, we can get a glimpse of how life was lived among the wealthy Victorians who first moved to Asylum Hill.

The next round of development in Asylum Hill was more modest, with homes built for the middle class residents who followed the wealthy out of the center city. The new residents lived in more closely-built neighborhoods, of which Laurel Street is a great example. The one-block section we walked is built entirely in the Queen Anne style dating from about 1880. The houses on this block, modest in scale compared with Nook Farm, were built for the burgeoning middle class.



HPA president, Matt Blood, leads a walking tour of the Asylum Hill neighborhood.

The Laurel Street buildings are densely packed and exuberantly ornamented. They sport bargeboards and gable ornaments, turrets, fancy brickwork, and elaborate porches.

Beginning in the early 20th century, several of the large insurance companies built substantial campuses at the eastern end of Farmington Avenue. The Aetna Life and Casualty Company building on Farmington Avenue, for example, is one of the largest Colonial Revival buildings ever built. Its scale is enormous. The design incorporates several different orders of Greek columns topped by an Ionic portico.

More compact housing followed with the development of large apartment buildings on Farmington Avenue after World War I. The apartment buildings display a variety of styles from Renaissance Revival to Spanish Colonial. The Ambassador at 206 Farmington Avenue, is a good example of a Renaissance Revival apartment building.

We also stopped at two more modern buildings. The first was the Hastings Hotel, Asylum Hill's ode to the International Style. Its broad horizontal bands of glass and brick represent

something entirely new. No less a departure from Asylum Hill's historic architecture is the neighborhood's only all-metal diner, once aptly named The Comet, on the corner of Sigourney Street and Farmington Avenue.

The walk was not that long — only a dozen or so blocks from Asylum and Sigourney to Farmington up to Woodland, with a detour down Laurel, Niles and Forest Streets and back to Asylum — but it revealed the way in which the Asylum Hill neighborhood packs a lot of history into a small space. 🌿



The Linus Plimpton House c.1865 (above) and the 1888 Alanson Trask House (right) were featured stops along the walking tour of the Asylum Hill neighborhood.



## Building rehabilitation: Watson Bliss House

Isidro Solis

The building, a grand Victorian home located at 97-99 Wethersfield Avenue, was constructed in 1887 for Watson Bliss, a wealthy Hartford businessman. Highly elaborate, it was designed in the classic Queen Anne style, with numerous turrets, bays, balconies and gables.



By the late 1990's, it was abandoned and decayed, a candidate for the city's demolition list. Instead, it was purchased by Isidro Solis, who rehabilitated the building, restored its old beauty, and converted it into six dwelling units. His actions have saved an endangered landmark and have given it new life.

## Building rehabilitation: Allied Plumbing Supplies Building

Carlos Mouta and West Side Management

The renovation of 1477 Park Street by Carlos Mouta and West Side Management is playing a key role in the revitalization of Parkville. His renovation has turned the building into commercial space for artists and for a variety of small businesses. Mouta gutted the building but retained the original floors and left beams and bricks exposed, creating rentable spaces with high ceilings and a feel of openness. A number of artisans have relocated from the Colt Building, and Mouta hopes to turn the entire area into a "design district."



## Building rehabilitation: Cathedral Lyceum

Melville Charitable Trust



The Cathedral Lyceum is an imposing brownstone-and-brick building on Lawrence Street in Frog Hollow. It was built in 1895 by Saint Joseph's Cathedral as part of its outreach mission to immigrant communities. The Melville Charitable Trust converted it to offices and a conference center for the Partnership for Strong Communities and other community organizations. The building was carefully rehabilitated to maintain its key elements, such as the stage and balconies of the third floor auditorium and the open 60-foot trusses in the former gymnasium on the first floor.

## Community education: "Place" in The Hartford Courant

Board of Contributors, for articles and commentary highlighting the historic character of Hartford.

Under the leadership of Tom Condon, editor of "Place," the Hartford Courant has devoted part of every Sunday's commentary section to articles about the way in which the built and natural environments impact our quality of life. The opinion pieces have helped lay the groundwork for the entire Hartford community to appreciate the buildings which make the city unique and to rethink its attitudes about preserving them.

## Building rehabilitation: 541 Albany Avenue

Hortense Ross, Precious Ross Ellis and Monica Ross

The Rosses bought the run-down, vacant 1904 building at the corner of Albany Avenue and Garden Street, designed by architect Isaac A. Allen, Jr., to house their business, Medical Temp Force, which provides temporary health care workers to nursing homes. With a loan from Fleet Community Bank and financial assistance from the city's Façade Improvement Program and other sources, Hortense Ross helped redesign the building, turning it into an economic catalyst for the Upper Albany neighborhood.





# ervation Week Awardees

## **Building rehabilitation and adaptive reuse: Trolley Barn** **The Village for Families and Children**

This monumental red brick building at 331 Wethersfield Avenue is distinguished by its large twin towers. Built in 1903, its back portion was once a huge 100-foot deep trolley barn for the Wethersfield Avenue trolley line. In the 1940's, the barn became a gym for boxing and wrestling and a hall for ice skating and dances. In 2002, The Village completed a renovation of the building, which included making full adaptive use of the rear portion of the building. It is now a service hub for The Village's South End community program. It also houses Aid to Artisans and Yo! Hartford, two community-based organizations.



## **Building rehabilitation: John Street** **Fire Maintenance Facility**

**Walter Wick and Linda Cheverton Wick**



The Wicks transformed the long-abandoned 1920 building at 36 John Street just south of downtown into a spectacular studio in which Walter Wick designs sets that he photographs for the children's books he writes. Wick is a nationally known children's author and photographer who has created the *I Spy* children's book series. The building has 12,000 square feet of space — enough to drive fire engines in and out of. Its most distinctive feature is the windows — more than 1,000 12" x 16" windows

arranged in 14-foot sections. Every one of them was replaced as part of the rehabilitation of the building, which is now an anchor for the revitalization of the South Downtown and Park Street areas.

**Continued on Page 6**

## **Building renovation and reuse: SNET Building**

**55 Trumbull Street Associates**

The 12-story Art Deco SNET building at the northern edge of Bushnell Park was constructed in two stages — the bottom six floors in 1930 and the top six floors in 1953. Its limestone walls are embellished with Mayan and Egyptian motifs. The completed building is designed to convey a sense of vertical thrust. David Nyberg and 55 Trumbull Street Associates bought the building in March, 2003, converted it from office use to housing and within seven months had arranged for the first tenants to move in. The building, with almost 200,000 square feet of space, now contains 136 apartment units and is in the vanguard of the downtown Hartford housing revival.



## **Building rehabilitation: 1154-1170 Albany Avenue**

**Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery and the City of Hartford Façade Improvement Program**

This large yellow-brick commercial and residential structure at the corner of Albany Avenue and Woodland Street in Upper Albany was completed in 1926. The building is owned by the Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery, one of the largest West Indian-American-owned chains in the United States. With the help of the City's Façade Improvement Program, numerous improvements were made to the facade of the building, including repointing the bricks. The repairs are part of a larger revitalization of Albany Avenue as a major business street in North Hartford.



**Community education:  
Northeast Magazine Articles on  
Historic Churches of Hartford**

**Jim Kuykendall**

A graphic artist and a page designer for the *Hartford Courant*, Jim Kuykendall created his own project to explore all the churches of Hartford — more than 110 of them — most of which he visited by bicycle. He then picked out eight special church buildings, which he described in four articles in *Northeast Magazine*. His articles are remarkable not merely for their selection of buildings and their history, but for the detail and the beauty of his many drawings of the exteriors and interiors of the churches that he chose.

**Community activism: Trees at Hartford  
Public Library**

**All of those who opposed the cutting down  
of the Hartford Public Library Plaza trees**

When the Hartford Public Library proposed to cut down four mature trees to make it easier to move construction equipment for its library renovation, more than 100 people attended a public hearing before City Forester John Kehoe to protest the loss of greenery downtown. The result was the preservation of three of the four trees.

**Building rehabilitation:  
64 Sherman Street**

**Maximilian Tondro and  
April Oettinger**

The single-family house at 64 Sherman Street in the West End was built in 1904 by William H. Scoville, one of Hartford's most prolific turn-of-the-century builder-architects. Maximilian Tondro and April Oettinger have revived the house with exceptional repainting and reroofing. The building very effectively uses contrasting colors to define its features, and its dormers have been reroofed in copper. The overall effect gives the building a sense of energy and highlights its Victorian character.



**Community activism: Columbus Boulevard**

**Linda Osten, Patrick Pinnell, Chuck Sheehan and the Coalition to Strengthen the  
Sheldon/Charter Oak Neighborhood (CSS/CON)**

When DOT proposed to turn Columbus Boulevard at Adriæn's Landing into a pedestrian-impassable, eight-lane road, the neighborhood objected. Through the persistence and advocacy of its leaders, it succeeded in having the road redesigned, with a narrower roadway, a broad tree-lined median, on-street parking, wider sidewalks, trees on both sides of the street, and traffic-calming devices. The revised plan will produce a pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard instead of a quasi-highway.



**22 Belden Street**

This Italianate building is one of a group of six abandoned buildings on Belden Street in the Clay Hill neighborhood that are targeted for rehabilitation by the same consortium of developers which redeveloped Mortson Street and Putnam Heights. The buildings are, however, still owned by the city. Unfortunately, a fire in late July caused significant damage to the building. As a

result, the city's building official has ordered that it either be secured and rehabilitated or be demolished. A fire at a second Belden Street building at the end of August has further endangered the project. HPA believes that the loss of either or both of these buildings would leave holes in the classic streetscape of Belden Street and would undercut the integrity of the planned revitalization of the street. HPA therefore strongly opposes demolition. 🌿

The fate of this city-owned office building near the southern edge of Hartford remains in doubt. Developer Jose Reategui, who owns the former Marc Anthony's building immediately adjacent to the property, originally planned to rehabilitate 990 Wethersfield Avenue as offices and the adjacent Marc Anthony building as a banquet hall. He changed his plans, however, in response to neighborhood opposition to the banquet hall. With neighborhood support, he now proposes to use the combined site to construct a senior housing complex. He believes that it is not feasible to incorporate 990 Wethersfield Avenue into the senior housing plan and that it must be demolished. At press time, the city was still deciding whether or not to sell the property to Reategui.

The 1938, Colonial Revival building is a plain but dignified red brick structure. It is newer than most of Hartford's historic buildings and it is not part of a historic neighborhood. The State Historic Preservation Officer, however, has blocked the use of state funds for any project which results in the demolition of the building. It is nevertheless possible that Reategui can develop the senior housing complex without governmental assistance. 🌿

**990 Wethersfield Avenue**

**Endangered**





## Historic District Plaques Promote Neighborhood Character

The West End Rising Star district, with financial assistance from Hartford's Rising Star program, has placed almost 150 historic marker plaques on buildings within the West End South National Register Historic District. All organizational work was carried out by neighborhood residents. HPA board members Stephanie Woodlock and Rafie Podolsky, who live in the district, played a significant role in promoting the program.

The presence of plaques on a large percentage of buildings in the neighborhood helps raise awareness of the historical significance of the district.

The Rising Star program is part of Mayor Eddie Perez's home ownership initiative. Funds for neighborhood improvement are managed by a non-profit called The Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc. The portion of the West End neighborhood which is designated as a Rising Star district lies to the south of Farmington Avenue and is bordered by Farmington Avenue, Prospect Avenue, Capitol Avenue and South Whitney Street. The area was built up largely between 1875 and 1910 and is almost completely intact.

Buildings in National Register districts are entitled to display a blue-and-silver marker plaque identifying them as part of a historic district. Individual owners could have purchased plaques for \$25 apiece from the Historic Preservation Division of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. It is believed, however, that this is one of the first times a historic district has organized itself to put plaques on every house. Because the Rising Star program paid for the plaques, there was no cost to individual homeowners.

The historic plaques are not the only way in which the historic character of the West End Rising Star neighborhood is being promoted. New street signs will soon be in place with the Charter Oak logo and the phrase "Historic West End." In addition, a new "Welcome to the Historic West End" gateway sign will be installed on West Boulevard at Prospect Avenue, where drivers enter the city from West Hartford.

The Rising Star Program, in conjunction with HPA, will also fund the creation of a West Boulevard National Register Historic District.

The historic plaque program in the West End follows an HPA-sponsored program last fall in Frog Hollow. After Lincoln Street, Allen Place and Vernon Street were added to the National Register, HPA and the Frog Hollow South Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee jointly gave marker plaques to the ten "best" buildings in the new historic district. 🌿

Steve Cohen and Stephanie Woodlock, who installed some of the West End plaques, proudly display a National Register historical marker. Photo: Beverly Dawes

## New HPA Board Members

**Tomas Nenortas**, who lives in New Britain with his wife, Raminta, owns Lithuanian Royal Club Imports. He has strong ties to the Frog Hollow neighborhood where his father was raised; and both his father and grandfather were on the board of the Lithuanian-American Citizens' Club. He is also very involved in the restoration of the Holy Trinity Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church on Capitol Avenue. His book, *Victorian Hartford*, to be published by Arcadia Books, will be out by Christmas.



Prof. **Dorothy Bosch Keller** of Marlborough is Chairperson of the Fine Arts and Performing Arts Department at Saint Joseph College in West Hartford, where she has been a faculty member since 1967. For the last 25 years she has taught a course entitled "City Limits: The Architectural History of Hartford." She has delivered slide/lecture presentations at numerous museums, historical societies, and religious institutions and has participated in radio and TV productions on behalf of such institutions as the Wadsworth Atheneum. A practicing artist, she has also had a number of one-woman photography exhibits.



**Kevin Donovan** is a manager of audit and assurance at Fiondella, Milone & LaSaracina, a public accounting firm located in Manchester. He has previously worked as a public accountant and a financial analyst for Ernest & Young and CIGNA, respectively. A graduate of Trinity College, he has B.A. in Economics with a minor in Architectural Studies. He brings to the board a strong interest in the history and architecture of Hartford. He lives in New Britain.



## Capewell Building Update

The Capewell administration building now has a new roof. Trusses went up in early August and sheathing is almost complete. Site preparation continues around the factory buildings. Greater Hartford Realty Management Corporation is currently taking applications for the condominium units and architectural drawings are now available for prospective buyers to view.

For additional information, please call Johnnie L. Vaught at Greater Hartford Realty, (860) 247-3633.

## HPA Receives Major Grant from Surdna Foundation

The Hartford Preservation Alliance has been awarded a two-year, \$50,000 per year grant by the Surdna Foundation. The Surdna Foundation is a New York-based charity committed to neighborhood revitalization in Hartford. The grant will make it possible for HPA to begin the process of becoming a staffed organization by hiring an executive director. Since 1997, when HPA was created, it has relied solely on volunteers, supplemented by assistance in the past two years from The Parisky Group, a consulting firm. HPA is also actively seeking financial support from other major donors so that it can open an office and complete its staffing plan. It is anticipated that staffing capacity will give HPA greater visibility in the Hartford community and increase its ability to impact preservation in Hartford.



HPA has also won a \$13,750 community education grant from the Melville Foundation. The grant is being used to develop and maintain a website and to expand and enhance our ability to put out a newsletter. At present, HPA has only a skeletal website at [www.hartfordpreservation.org](http://www.hartfordpreservation.org). Within a few months, we expect that location to grow into a true website, with information about HPA and preservation issues in Hartford and links to preservation resources.

## Do you work for a company that participates in the United Way?

If so, you can now designate HPA as a recipient of your contributions, even if HPA does not appear on the checklist of eligible organizations. Here's how:

In Part 4 of the Employee Pledge Form, choose "How My Pledge is Directed"

Under the "Specific Care" column fill in the following lines:

Other Agency Name: **Hartford Preservation Alliance**

Address: **P.O. Box 230272, Hartford, CT 06123-0272**

Amount: **The amount you would like to allocate from your pledge to HPA**

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