

Preservationworks
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19 August 2015

Town of Poughkeepsie Town Board
Town Hall
1 Overocker Road
Poughkeepsie, New York 12603

Greetings,

In 2013, with the Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center, Fergus Falls, Minnesota on the brink of demolition, Christian VanAntwerpen, myself and 48 other photographers, videographers, historians and volunteers coordinated with the city, Otter Tail Historic Society and the Friends of the Kirkbride to obtain a "snapshot in time" of all 600,000 square feet of the Kirkbride building as a historic record. Shortly after, with reinvigorated public interest, multiple developers came forward with proposals for the reuse of the building. Even more exciting has been the community involvement - the Kirkbride has been the site of Fergus Falls Summer Fest, stage for "The Kirkbride Cycle" a play by PlaceBase Productions exploring the past, present and future of the building and it's grounds, through a public "walking theatre" performance based on the history and stories of the building. Fergus Falls Springboard for the Arts has instituted the Hinge Arts program, providing local artists stays of 2-12 weeks on the grounds in newly converted apartments in a former nurse's dormitory owned by a private developer. At this time the city has parted ways with the developer they had been working with; but has restated their intent to secure and stabilize the Kirkbride building and actively search for a developer that has the experience, resources and vision to breath life back into their "Castle on the Hill."

Preservationworks was founded in April of 2015 by Mr. VanAntwerpen as a not for profit (501c status pending) organization dedicated to advocacy for Kirkbride Plan hospitals. In the furthering of our mission we aim to serve as the "one stop shop" for information pertinent to the redevelopment and reuse of these structures. We have been reaching out to stakeholders in redeveloped, at risk and transitional Kirkbride Plan hospitals including but not limited to owners, developers, historical societies and grassroots organizations. Our hope is that through shared knowledge the rising tide lifts all boats. Redeveloping, even stabilizing, a structure the size of a Kirkbride Plan hospital is a gargantuan undertaking; we are here to help.

Hudson River State Hospital has some hurdles to overcome on its path to redevelopment, but they are not insurmountable. Previous fire damage has been devastating to the structure and recent arson is of grave concern. Securing the buildings and surrounding areas as well as clearing a pathway for emergency responders should be an immediate priority. While there are and will be many difficulties I'd like to take some time to offer words of hope and encouragement. Some of you may not be aware that there are multiple Kirkbride Hospitals currently undergoing transformation; I'd like to introduce them to you.

- Athens State Hospital, Athens Ohio is currently being stabilized and the first discussions of permanent reuse have begun.
- The Richard Olmstead Complex, Buffalo, New York is currently undergoing its transformation into a hotel, state of the art conference center and the Buffalo Architecture Center celebrating Buffalo's architectural contributions and heritage. Restoration and renovations are on schedule for a 2016 reopening - this 136 year old beauty will serve her community for decades to come.
- Bryce Hospital, Tuscaloosa, Alabama is currently under renovations, repurposing the administration building and four wards to serve as a welcome center, cultural center, reception venue, associated offices and administrative space as well as museums dedicated to both University of Alabama history and the history of mental health.
- Since being purchased by a private developer in 2007 Weston State Hospital, Weston, West Virginia (Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum) has hosted historic and ghost tours. These year round and frequently sold out tours have drawn visitors from all corners of the globe; the proceeds are funding continued stabilization and restoration.
- Traverse City State Hospital, Traverse City, Michigan; now branded as "The Village at Grand Traverse Commons" has been saved from deterioration and lovingly polished into a jewel for northern Michigan. Purchased by The Minervini Group in 2002 and using a combination of tax credits, governmental grants on the state and federal level as well as private financing 460,000 square feet of the approximate 810,000 square foot complex has been renovated so far. A true walkable community, the campus includes retail, dining, commercial and professional offices as well as residential and senior living. While the center administration building was demolished in 1963 the former patient wards and cottages provide a unique canvas for the many retail shops, eateries, private residences, and senior citizen community. Recently completed Kirkbride Hall, a 2,600 square foot event space occupies the former chapel. Future plans include additional residential units, a hotel and event center, further development of retail opportunities and professional offices. I have included a PDF of the path to the Village of Grand Traverse Commons successes as well as a single page Vital Statistics timeline.

With the recent demolition of Greystone Park, Morris Plains, New Jersey the already dwindling number of surviving Kirkbride Plan hospitals that are likely to be repurposed in the future can be counted on one hand. These monuments, built with no expense spared, to provide the best care, and designed at it's core to be a healing force for the patients housed within are of such caliber as to be economically impossible to reproduce in modern times. They have served their communities for decades past and stand waiting for their rebirth. I am excited to witness Hudson State Hospitals rebirth and offer the services of myself and the Preservationworks team to assist EFG/DRA Heritage LLC, the community, local preservation groups and the Town of Poughkeepsie navigate the challenges ahead.

Best regards,

Vincent Verna
Vice President, Preservationworks