



## Press Release

## For Immediate Release

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### POSSIBLE AFTERLIFE FOR ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

PITTSBURGH — Preserve Croatian Heritage Foundation (PCHF) will release feasibility studies regarding the possible adaptive re-use of St. Nicholas Church of Pittsburgh's Northside on Friday, December 4, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. Feasibility consultants will join representatives of PCHF, the Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC) and the Northside Community Development Fund (NSCDF) at Penn Brewery Restaurant in East Deutschtown to discuss the proposed strategy for the site.

Efforts to preserve the former St. Nicholas Church along Route 28 on Pittsburgh's Northside had reached a critical stage in 2008. Although the church was designated a historic structure by the City in 2001, PENNDOT was ready to proceed with the first stages of Route 28 reconstruction and was pressing for a definitive solution to the building's future. A number of preservation groups fought successfully to redesign the Route 28 realignment to avoid demolition of the church, and a proposal was launched by the PCHF to establish a new museum on the site of the existing church.

Two Feasibility Studies commissioned by PCHF explore a conversion of the church into a National Immigrant Museum & Trail that will connect the church to new parking and provide a link to the existing Riverfront Trail. This museum will not only preserve the church's historic architecture and hillside grotto; it will also preserve the histories and tell the story of all immigrants to the Pittsburgh region.

“We are looking at a productive re-use for this historic asset that respects its cultural and religious heritage,” says Mark T Fatla, Esq., Executive Director of NSLC. “The next step will involve the creation of an exploratory committee to pursue fundraising and acquisition of the site, before proceeding to full design. We look forward to working cooperatively with current owners St. Nicholas parish of Millvale, potential buyers Lamar Advertising, and PENNDOT.”

A Design Study has been completed by Astorino to determine if the buildings can be adapted to a museum use, and a Market Analysis has been prepared by Integra Realty Resources to determine if such a museum could attract enough visitors to make it financially viable. The Northside Leadership Conference served as Project Manager to assist PCHF through the feasibility process, and State Senator Jim Ferlo provided a grant for consultant fees through the City of Pittsburgh's Urban Redevelopment Authority with support from Mayor Luke Ravenstahl.

“The goal is to convert St. Nicholas Church into a museum without compromising its historic character,” says John Francona, Senior Vice President of Architecture at Astorino. “The interior will be conditioned to museum standards, with all of the new systems hidden in order not to diminish the beautiful Byzantine-style architecture. Blending new architecture with the historic is always a challenge.”

“The Immigrant Museum is a unique plan for the re-use of this historic church and grotto, and it would distinguish Pittsburgh to have it,” states Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr., President of Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. “A great deal of work will be involved to bring it to a funded reality, but with our rich ethnic history, it is a natural for our city. Continuing the river trail right through the property is beneficial as well.”



Preserve Croatian  
Heritage Foundation

