

# **FRIENDS of the BARNES FOUNDATION**

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For Immediate Release

March 16, 2009

## **FRIENDS OF THE BARNES FOUNDATION URGES DONORS TO ENDOW BARNES FOUNDATION'S HISTORIC MERION HOME**

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(MERION STATION, March 13) Advocates for preservation of the Barnes Foundation in its historic Merion home have written directly to the donors funding the dismantling of the Barnes art collection to urge them to abandon their financial support for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway project to the extent they legally can. The appeal comes as serious questions are being raised about the use of dwindling public and private resources to replicate an institution that already exists a mere stone's throw from the border with Philadelphia.

To support their position, the Friends of the Barnes Foundation point to extreme financial uncertainty as well as the lack of any published study of the move by the Barnes Foundation. It cites a case analysis by a leading expert on museums that calls the move "highly risky."

Other points raised include the following:

- All of the ostensible reasons cited as justification for the move -- financial mismanagement, inaccessibility, the neighbors --have lost credibility.
- The Barnes Foundation in Merion is eligible for National Historic Landmark status and to remain eligible, the site must remain intact.
- The funding now needed for a Barnes in Philadelphia is much larger than the \$150,000,000 originally planned for in 2004.
- A new facility will have a significantly larger annual operating deficit than the Merion site.

- A new facility would require a substantially larger endowment than originally planned and far larger than that required for the Merion site.
- The Barnes in Merion can now generate at least \$2,500,000 in revenue every year with at least 144,000 casual visitors under a plan that has wide community support.
- The Barnes in Merion should be energetically promoted to bring tourism benefits to Philadelphia *right now*.
- The valuable Parkway real estate now being donated by the City of Philadelphia could instead be used to generate vibrant street life and revenue to the City in ways that a Barnes replica never will.
- The reputation of Philadelphia as a center for culture and steward of our nation's historical legacy has been seriously harmed by the plan to dismantle the Barnes.
- Since the plan to replicate the Barnes is an example of a needless waste of resources, the project does not fit Philadelphia Mayor Nutter's promise of "A Green City."
- Since the Barnes in Merion is the crown jewel of the region's cultural monuments, supporting it creates an outstanding model for regional cooperation into the future.

Philadelphia artist and member of the Friends Steering Committee Barbara Rosin remarked, "The current economic crisis affects everyone and everything. As terrible this is, it provides a golden opportunity to prevent the destruction of the extraordinary Barnes in Merion. Spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars for an imitation Barnes when the real thing is already here is obviously not in the public interest. It's time for a turnaround."

For more information, <http://www.barnesfriends.org>

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