

WOODMERE'S CAMPAIGN TO SAVE ST. MICHAEL'S HALL

Woodmere's objective:

Raise \$5M+ to acquire St. Michael's Hall at 9001 Germantown Avenue from the Sisters of St. Joseph to expand the capacity of operations and enhance our ability to tell the Story of Philadelphia's Art and Artists.



History:

The mansion known as St. Michael's Hall was built in 1859 by Quaker merchant and businessman William Henry Trotter. In 1884, it was purchased by Alfred Craven Harrison, who was in the business of sugar refineries. Harrison was deeply involved in the arts and served on the board of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He must have been happy when the estate next door—Woodmere—was purchased in 1898 by fellow art lover and member of City Council, Charles Knox Smith, who set about converting his property into a museum.

The Sisters of St. Joseph purchased the Harrison estate in 1927. In 1945 it became a dormitory for students of Chestnut Hill College. Over the next decades and until fall 2020, it was maintained as a residence for the Sisters.

The Property:

The historic mansion sits on four acres at the center of the Wissahickon Watershed overlooking Whitemarsh Valley. The 17,000-square-foot building incorporates views from every vantage point and many rooms feature intricate woodwork and high-quality carvings. Fortunately, historic design elements have been maintained. The building is in excellent condition with a new roof, new windows, and good utility systems.

Considerations:

As we look to the past to guide our future, it is more important than ever to support our community's unique qualities and assets. In acquiring St Michael's Hall as an adjunct building for Woodmere, there are multiple value propositions to consider:

Historic Preservation:

The acquisition would represent a significant act of neighborhood preservation, not only to maintain the grandeur of the home, but also to protect a shared history. Like Woodmere itself, St. Michael's Hall is a significant historic structure with many important stories to tell.

Preservation of green space and the environment:

In preserving this intact four-acre estate, we are honoring Chestnut Hill's history of maintaining the green ecosystem of the Wissahickon Watershed. Woodmere would maintain the grounds as an accessible community asset.

The **Chestnut Hill Conservancy** and **The Friends of the Wissahickon** endorse the imperative to preserve the home and its four acres at the center of the watershed.



The Need:

The purchase of St. Michael's Hall is a significant opportunity. Not only is the property steps away from Woodmere, but it also achieves mission-aligned goals.

Moreover, the preservation of St. Michael's represents a community priority in preservation, conservation, and neighborhood spirit.

The Vision:

Woodmere would renovate the building to expand the capacity of back-of-house functions such as framing, conservation, offices, and storage. Eventually, galleries would be created.

The grounds would allow for further growth of Woodmere's outdoor sculpture experience and the expansion of education programs that use art as a means to engage with the outdoors and the environment.



Compelling Case:

Beyond the treasures held inside the museum, Woodmere is a cherished Philadelphia institution that performs a critically important civic mission with regard to the art and artists of our city.

Over the last ten years, Woodmere has become increasingly recognized nationally as a one-of-a-kind arts institution.

Right now, our community is presented with two options:

As of right, a developer could demolish St. Michael's Hall and build 23 single-family homes on the property. On the other hand, we have the opportunity to ensure the ongoing institutional health of Woodmere and to preserve the history and future of Chestnut Hill.

Just as the spirit of the arts are alive, so must be our philanthropic spirit.

Bill Valerio, The Patricia Van Burgh Allison Director & CEO

Woodmere Art Museum

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Budget:

- Purchase price: \$2.5M
- Renovations for basic needs: \$2.5M

Business Plan Preparation:

Thanks to the generosity of a developer who studied the site, but chose not to follow through with purchase, Woodmere has in its possession:

- Detailed land survey
- Environmental survey
- Zoning and land-use study
- Subdivision study
- Interior plans
- Building systems analysis
- Elevator placement analysis
- Cost estimate on renovation

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Bill Valerio at wvalerio@woodmereartmuseum.org
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To learn more about giving and pledging, go to
<https://woodmereartmuseum.org/about/campaign-to-save-st-michaels-hall>