



# **The President's House: Freedom and Slavery in Making a New Nation**



## **PUBLIC MEETING**

**December 13, 2007, 6:30–8:30 p.m.  
Freedom Theatre**

### **AGENDA**

Introduction	Rosalyn McPherson, Owner's Representative
Welcome & Remarks	Honorable John F. Street, Mayor of Philadelphia
Remarks	Darla Sidles, Acting Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park
Introduction of the Oversight Committee & Project Update	Rosalyn McPherson
Incorporating the Archeology into the Commemoration	Emanuel Kelly, Principal, Kelly/Maiello Architects & Planners
Process that Led to Selected Option	Michael Coard, Esq., Founding Member, ATAC – Avenging the Ancestors Coalition
Untold Stories	Karen Warrington, Director of Communications, Office of the Hon. Robert A. Brady, U.S. House of Representatives
Next Steps – The Fundraising Challenge	Joyce Wilkerson, Chief of Staff, City of Philadelphia
Questions and Answers	Public
Final Comments	Rosalyn McPherson

*The City of Philadelphia and Independence National Historical Park thank you for your participation this evening.  
We also gratefully acknowledge the Freedom Theatre for hosting this event.*

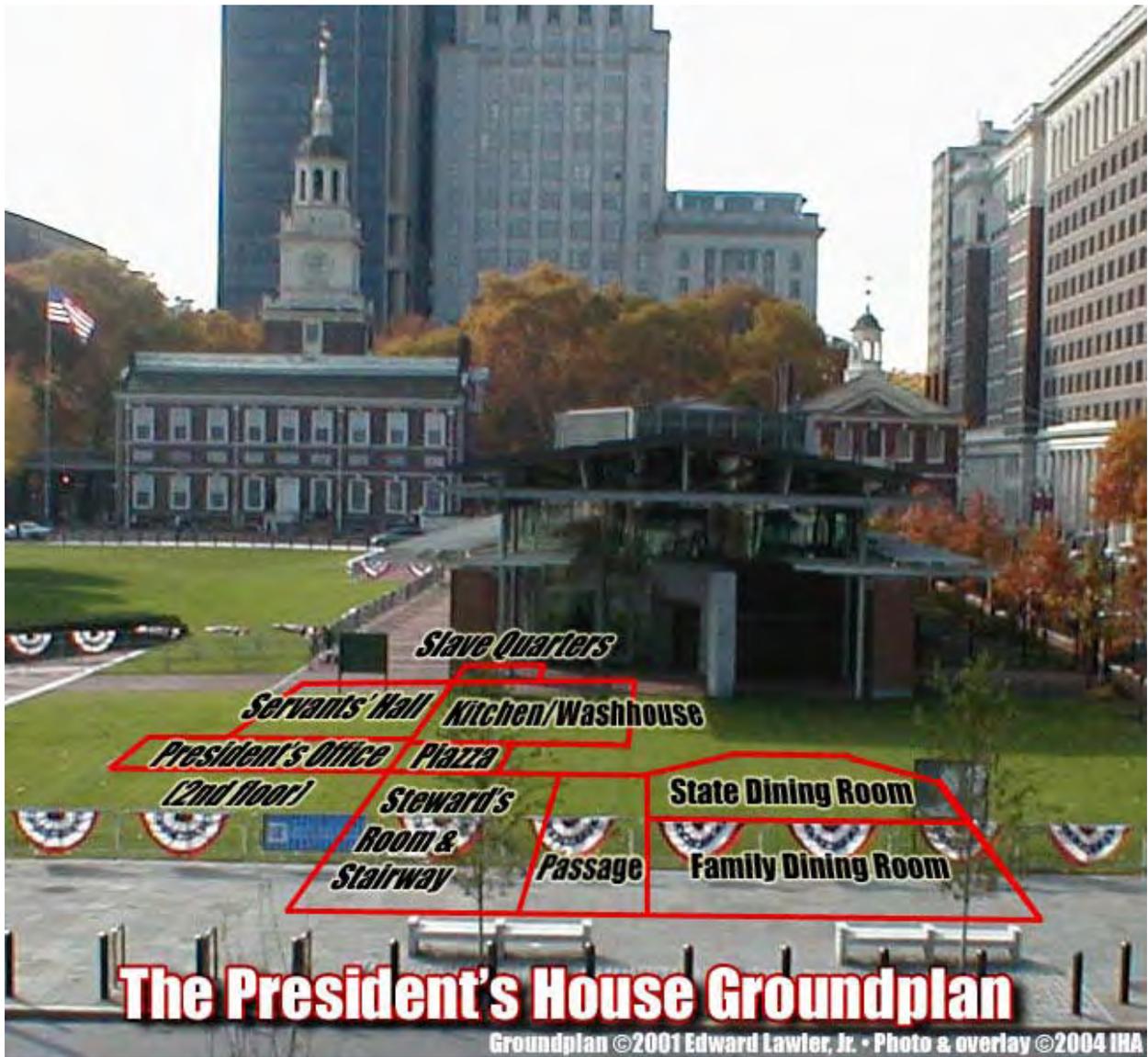
# **THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE:**

## **FREEDOM AND SLAVERY IN MAKING A NEW NATION**

From 1790 to 1800, when Philadelphia was our new nation's capital city, Presidents George Washington and John Adams lived and worked in a mansion – *the President's House* – that stood a block north of Independence Hall. In that house, our first two presidents literally invented what it meant to be the Chief Executive of the United States.

The profoundly disturbing documented truth is that in this house, there also lived and worked at least nine enslaved Africans – kept by George Washington (not Adams) – in the same era when the founders of our country were declaring that “all men are created equal.” In this house, George Washington signed the notorious Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

The story of the President's House is thus one of achievement and infamy -- of the birth of a free nation and indefensible slavery existing side-by-side. It is a story of remarkable bravery, highlighted by the escape to freedom by Washington's chef, Hercules, and his wife's personal servant, Oney Judge. As a nation, we have a compelling obligation to illuminate the history of this house and its inhabitants in all its fullness. What better place to do this than on the threshold of the Liberty Bell?



## **ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE LIBERTY BELL CENTER**

The City of Philadelphia, National Park Service, and Independence National Historical Park are working in partnership to complete this historic project. This is an opportunity to tell a story of national importance in an honest, inspiring, and informative way – through architecture, landscaping, imagery, and interpretive text placed adjacent to the Liberty Bell Center, home to the symbol of freedom in this country.

Today, there is no President's House, its last remnants having been demolished in 1951. There is no plan to recreate it through this project. Rather, this project will result in a permanent, outdoor commemorative installation to be placed on the footprint of the President's House (immediately adjacent to the Liberty Bell Center), covering approximately 12,000 square feet. The intent is to offer a stirring experience to visitors that deepens the experience of the Liberty Bell itself.

The proposed installation will become the newest addition to a revitalized Independence National Historical Park, known as our nation's most historic square mile. More than two million visitors seek out the Liberty Bell each year in its new Liberty Bell Center, which opened October 9, 2003. This landmark project will reach and teach tens of millions of people for generations to come.

# THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE: TIMELINE

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>COMPLETED</b>
Historical Society of PA publishes article by Ed Lawler noting that "The last thing that a visitor will walk across or pass before entering the Liberty Bell Center will be the slave quarters that George Washington added to the President's House." ATAC, Generations Unlimited, Ad Hoc Historians, Independence Hall Association, and Multicultural Affairs Congress successfully call for commemoration of the President's House and the enslaved Africans who toiled there	January, 2002 – 2004	<b>X</b>
At opening of new Liberty Bell Center, Mayor Street pledges \$1.5 million in support of commemorative project	October 9, 2003	<b>X</b>
Congressmen Fattah and Brady announce federal grant of \$3.6 million to fund the project	September 6, 2005	<b>X</b>
City & Independence National Historical Park convene President's House Oversight Committee	September 14, 2005	<b>X</b>
Request for Qualifications (RFQ) distributed nationally following review & comment by Oversight Committee	September 26, 2005	<b>X</b>
Oversight Committee reviews responses to RFQ	November 14, 2005	<b>X</b>
Public Forum	November 17, 2005	<b>X</b>
Mayor Street and INHP Superintendent Reidenbach announce short-list of semi-finalists to receive Request for Proposal (RFP)	March 28, 2006	<b>X</b>
Semi-finalists visit site	April 10, 2006	<b>X</b>
Public meeting with experts on commemorative installations – Howard Dodson (Schomburg Center) and Fath Davis Ruffins (Smithsonian)	June 5, 2006	<b>X</b>

# THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE:

## TIMELINE (cont'd)

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>COMPLETED</b>
Proposals and models submitted by five semi-finalists	July 17, 2006	<b>X</b>
Models placed on display for public comment in National Constitution Center and African American Museum in Philadelphia. Over 1,000 comment cards are submitted and posted on website	August 16–October 1, 2006	<b>X</b>
Oversight Committee meets to consider public comment cards and semi-finalist proposals	September 22 and December 14, 2006	<b>X</b>
Mayor Street and INHP Superintendent Dennis Reidenbach announce final team headed by Kelly/Maiello	February 27, 2007	<b>X</b>
Archeological dig begins	March 21, 2007	<b>X</b>
City and INHP issue press releases reporting significant unexpected findings at dig	May 2, 10, and 17, 2007	<b>X</b>
Oversight Committee meets to discuss response to archeological discoveries; Mayor and Oversight Committee ask Kelly/Maiello to develop alternatives and costs	May 18 and June 5, 2007	<b>X</b>
President's House featured in City's July 4 Independence Day celebration: Dr. Cheryl LaRoche of the archeological team speaks	July 4, 2007	<b>X</b>
Special task force convened to brainstorm ideas for incorporating archeology into design	July 18, 2007	<b>X</b>
Archeological dig concludes; site temporarily closed to protect findings	July 31, 2007	<b>X</b>
Kelly/Maiello presents alternatives to Oversight Committee and Mayor Street	November 7, 2007	<b>X</b>
Public update	December 13, 2007	
Projected Dedication Date *	Fall 2009	
* This date depends on successful fundraising efforts.		



## THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE

*Freedom and Slavery in Making a New Nation*

Kelly/Maiello team's preliminary design for the President's House commemoration, prepared prior to the archaeological excavation

# INCORPORATING THE ARCHEOLOGY

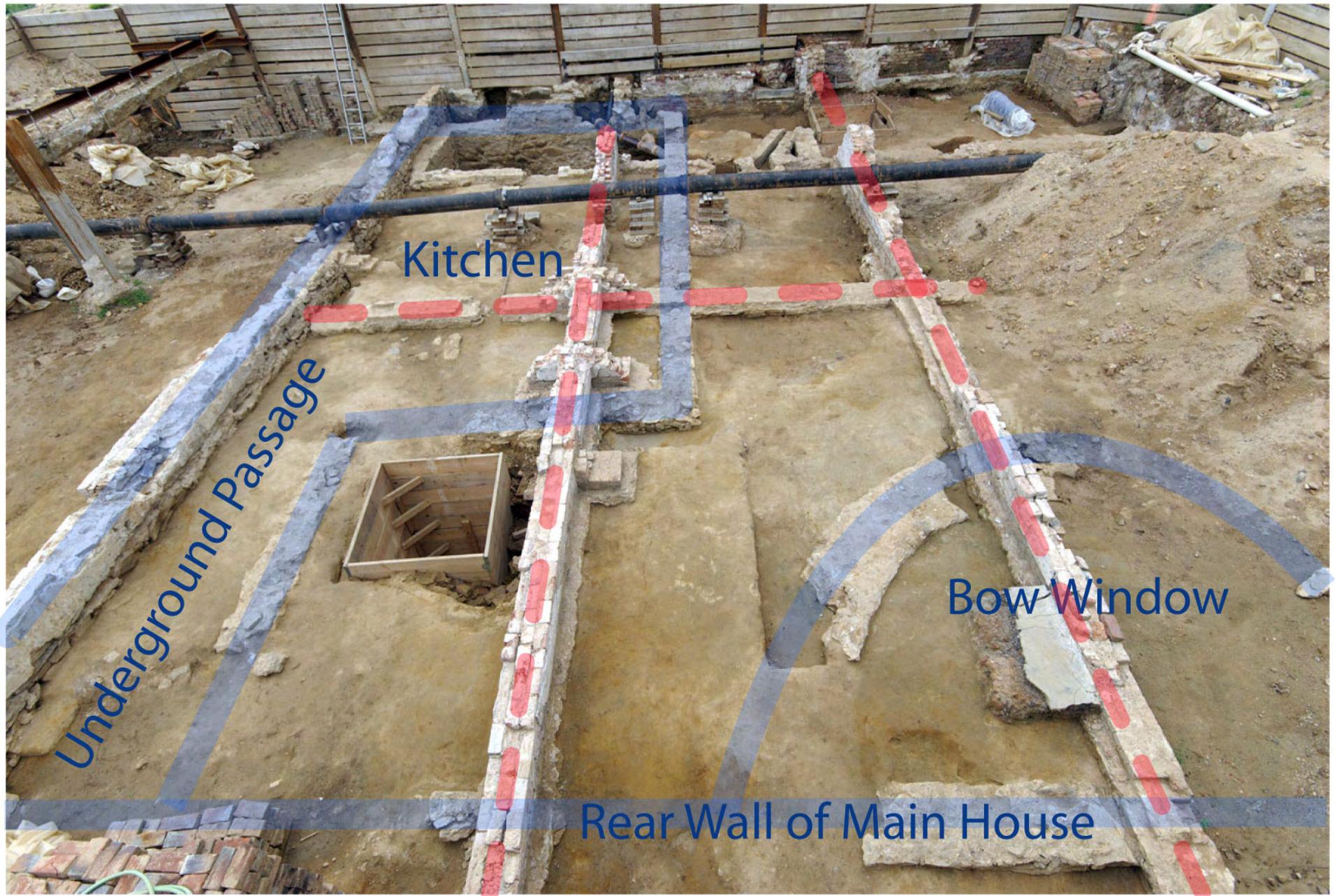
The archeological “dig” at the President’s House site, conducted from March through July of 2007, yielded exciting and unexpected findings. Archeologists found a basement below the kitchen where Hercules – an enslaved African who later escaped to freedom – presided as George Washington’s acclaimed chef. They uncovered the foundation from a bow window believed to be the prototype for the Oval Office in the Washington D.C. White House. And they found an underground passage from the kitchen to the main house, likely used by the enslaved and servants working between the two structures.

These findings and the excitement surrounding the ongoing dig itself captured the imagination of nearly 300,000 visitors, dramatically conveying the juxtaposition of freedom and slavery in making this new nation. Mayor Street, Acting Superintendent Sidles of Independence National Historical Park, and the President’s House Oversight Committee have agreed on a plan to incorporate the archeological findings into the final project. Kelly/Maiello Architects & Planners, the lead member of the team chosen to design the President’s House commemoration, developed the plan after input from a specially convened Task Force of experts in archeological preservation, exhibit design, African-American history, and architecture.

## **INCORPORATING THE ARCHEOLOGY (cont'd)**

The enhanced design features a multi-sided clear glass enclosure (“vitrine) at ground level, through which visitors will be able to look down and see an extensive portion of the original dig showing all of the key archeological findings in their undisturbed configuration. This solution will allow Kelly/Maiello to retain most of its original preliminary design. That design places incomplete walls – architectural fragments – around the original President’s House footprint, in order to establish a powerful, historically accurate sense of place. Also, the area of the President’s House now known as the Slave Quarters will continue to be especially defined in a solemn manner – a main goal of advocates who sought this commemoration. State-of-the-art audio and interactive visual technology will tell a series of compelling stories of life in the President’s House.

The archeological discoveries will now become an integrated part of the overall design, which will continue to evolve in the months ahead. They will enrich this project and strengthen the stories told about the people who lived in that house – including, most especially, the enslaved Africans honored by this commemoration.



Kitchen

Underground Passage

Bow Window

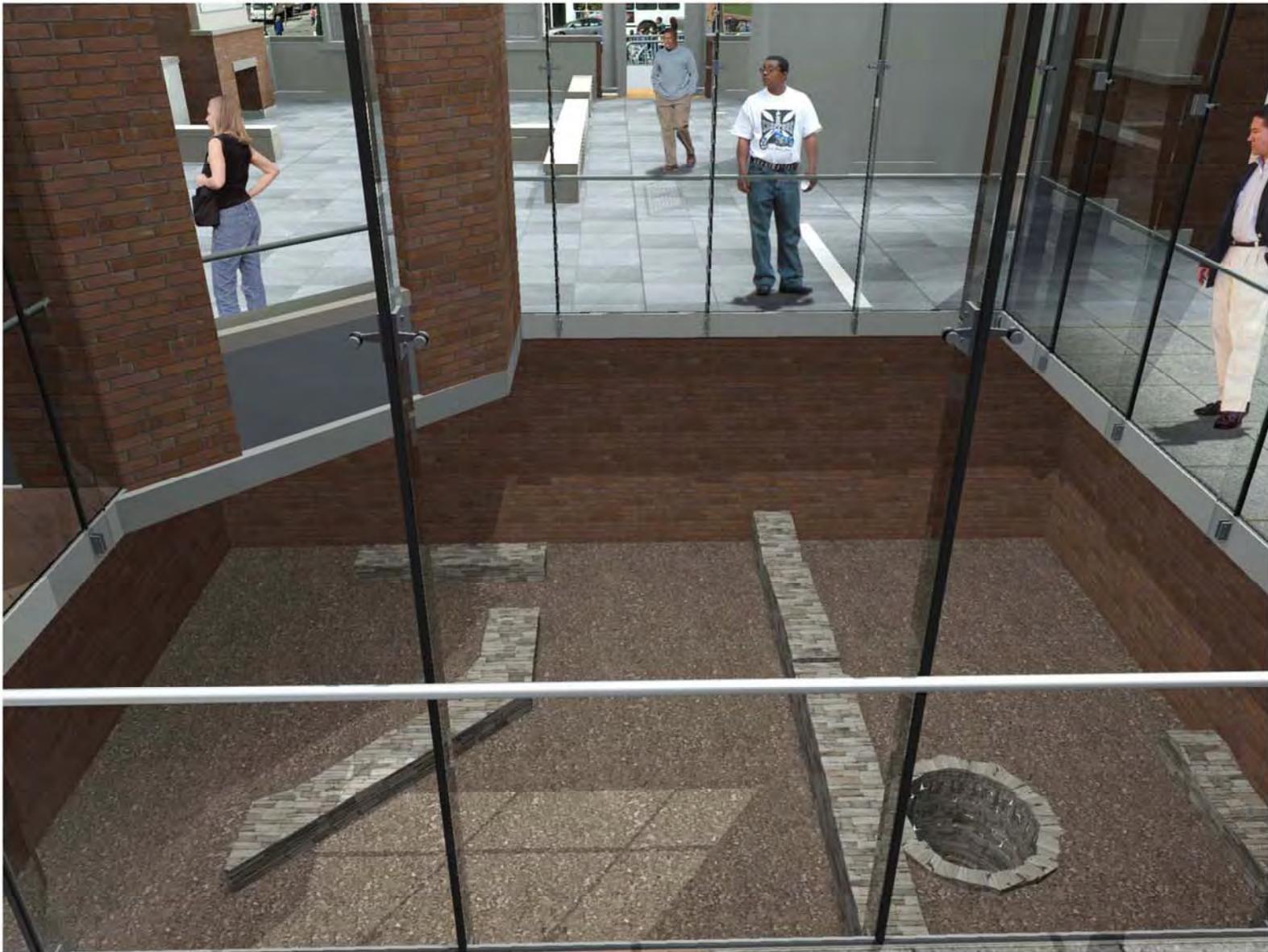
Rear Wall of Main House

President's House

19th Century



*ALTERNATE 02*  
**Kelly/Maiello**  
*Architects & Planners*



*ALTERNATE 02*  
**Kelly/Maiello**  
*Architects & Planners*



*Visitor Experience 8: Slave Quarters*

Conceptual Sketch illustrating design development incorporating transparent materials and illustration from the interior at night.

**Kelly/Maiello**  
*Architects & Planners*

# THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

To help guide the project's development and ensure its ultimate success, the City and Independence National Historical Park have convened a formal Oversight Committee that includes representatives from the advocacy groups that called for this commemorative project. The members of the Oversight Committee are as follows:

- Romona Riscoe Benson**, President & CEO, African American Museum in Philadelphia
- Michael Coard, Esq.**, Founding Member, Avenging the Ancestors Coalition
- Tanya Hall**, Executive Director, Philadelphia Multicultural Affairs Congress, a division of the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Edward Lawler, Jr.**, Scholar, Representing the Independence Hall Association
- Charlene Mires**, Associate Prof. of History, Villanova University; Editor, Pennsylvania History Studies Series, Pennsylvania Historical Association; Representing the Ad Hoc Historians
- Darla Sidles**, Acting Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park (replacing **Dennis Reidenbach**, now Northeast Regional Director, National Park Service)
- Karen Warrington**, Director of Communications, Office of the Honorable Robert A. Brady, U.S. House of Representatives
- Joyce Wilkerson**, Chief of Staff, City of Philadelphia
- [The late **John Skief**, Chief Administrative Officer of the Harambee Institute of Science & Technology Charter School; Representing the Honorable Chaka Fattah, U.S. House of Representatives]

# CORE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROJECT:

The final design will have to contain the following elements:

- A. The outer boundaries or footprint of the President's House must be clearly demarcated.
- B. The footprint of the Slave Quarters must be conspicuously highlighted and a solemn "sense of place" clearly established.
- C. Documented interior rooms or spaces may be included in the design's groundplan to a level of detail that the designer determines will be understood by the public. Additional interpretive elements may provide expanded explanation of historical use of the property.
- D. Six substantive themes must be reflected in the final design. The first five listed below emerged from the preliminary Conceptual Design, and the sixth became clear in a Public Forum held October 30, 2004:
  - 1. The house and the people who lived and worked there
  - 2. The Executive Branch of the U.S. Government
  - 3. The system and methods of slavery
  - 4. African-American Philadelphia (including an emphasis on free African-Americans)
  - 5. The move to freedom
  - 6. History lost and found (how knowledge of the President's House and the presence of slavery was forgotten and recovered; why we must remember)

# CORE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

(continued)

- E. Five cultural values also emerged from the October 30, 2004 Public Forum:
1. **Identity** – Interpretation at this site offers an opportunity to put names and faces on a small fraction of the enslaved and free people of African descent who were part of the fabric of the life in the President’s House. These enslaved individuals thus are symbols of the millions of people who were held in bondage during the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. What is known of the lives of those who were enslaved and worked in the President’s House will be a backdrop of the story.
  2. **Memory** (a sense of influence of the past on the present) – The nation’s first Executive Branch conducts the affairs of the government in the rooms of the house. At the same moment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the economic labor system that made it legal to enslave human beings was actively practiced in the house. By describing and honoring the enslaved people who lived at the site, we are commemorating and honoring the many enslaved people whose stories will never be known and told.
  3. **Agency** – The 18<sup>th</sup> century system of slavery was a complete economic, cultural and social world with people of African descent as full participants in the affairs of the time.
  4. **Dignity** – The enslaved population retained their dignity. George Washington’s slaves adhered to an unwritten code of conduct that was as nuanced and demanding as the first president’s well-known code of civility.
  5. **Truth** – A factual account of how Washington’s household used nuances of the Pennsylvania Gradual Abolition Act of 1780 to keep individuals in slavery while they were in Philadelphia rather than at the estate in Mt. Vernon, Virginia. The condition of those in bondage was maintained in order to sustain the political and social strata of society during the post-revolutionary era.

**THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE:  
FREEDOM AND SLAVERY  
IN MAKING A NEW NATION**

We want to hear from you!

We welcome comments concerning the President's House project at any time. Please visit our website, [www.phila.gov/presidentshouse](http://www.phila.gov/presidentshouse), and submit comments by clicking on the "Contact Us" button.

Or please e-mail, write, or fax to the following addresses:

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