

# Preservation Buffalo Niagara Honorees

## *Category: Restoration* **Corpus Christi Church** **Buffalo, New York**

Constructed in Romanesque Revival style by noted Buffalo architects Schmill & Gould and dedicated in 1909 to serve a rapidly growing Polish community, Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church on Buffalo's east side was scheduled to be closed in 2003, when the Franciscan Fathers, who had nurtured the parish since its inception, moved on.

But in a grassroots effort that received the blessing of then Buffalo Bishop Henry Mansell, concerned parishioners and other volunteers, together with priests of the Pauline Order—taking over from the Franciscans—mobilized to take on the vital work of renewal and preservation.

Through their combined efforts, the church complex has been landmarked, and a one million dollar preservation fund campaign was

completed nearly a year ahead of schedule. A new black slate roof matching the original in quality, shape, and color has been installed; and all deteriorated and damaged copper gutters, downspouts, and flashings were replaced with new copper elements following original detailing and profile. Two large stone chimneys were stabilized, and restoration will begin this spring on the church's south tower.

In addition, cherished devotions and cultural observances have been revived, drawing visitors from across the region. Parish enrollment has increased, new gardens and regularly



scheduled clean-ups have improved the streetscape, and a significant connection to Buffalo's immigrant past has been saved for future generations.

Preservation Buffalo Niagara is pleased to honor Corpus Christi's remarkable rebirth, which has benefited the City of Buffalo by helping to reverse the decline of the immediate area and fortifying renewal of the nearby Broadway Market and Central Terminal.



Preservation Buffalo Niagara is pleased to honor the carefully planned and executed two-year process that resulted in local designation of the first historic neighborhood district in downtown Niagara Falls as a model for empowering and involving neighbors in the conversations leading to historic designation.

The Park Place/4<sup>th</sup> Street neighborhood, located between City Hall on Main Street and the Niagara Gorge to the west, was one of three districts

city.

At the first meeting called by the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission to discuss designation, Park Place neighbors pushed for their neighborhood to be considered first, and took the initiative, holding their own informational meeting, attending subsequent monthly Commission meetings, and speaking on behalf of designation before the City Council.

Over the months, dissenting minds were changed through knowledge of

## *Category: Neighborhood Conservation* **The Park Place Historic District** **Niagara Falls Historic** **Preservation Commission/** **Park Place Neighborhood Residents**

recommended for historic designation as a result of a 2005 historic survey conducted in the

the benefits to be gained by designation conveyed in the various meetings, and not a single comment against designation was raised at the Council hearing or in news articles about the issue.

In the year since designation, homeowners have consulted with the Commission about work they wished to do in order to protect the historic character of the neighborhood. In turn, the Commission has gone out of its way to accommodate the economic realities of historic preservation faced by homeowners in the new district.

It is hoped that this model will be used again to designate additional historic districts in the City of Niagara Falls, as well as in other communities.