



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

January 7, 2022

Ms. Bari Beasley, President and CEO
Heritage Foundation of Williamson County, TN
112 Bridge Street
Franklin, TN 37064

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and discuss the Heritage Foundation's December 2021 plan for creation of the Franklin Grove Estate & Gardens on the former campus of O'More College of Design. The National Trust for Historic Preservation strongly supports the Heritage Foundation's planned approach to preserving this historic property, which reflects well-established best practices of historic preservation, including adaptive reuse, infill construction, shared use with income-producing enterprises, and community engagement. Through thoughtful planning and innovative design, coupled with restoration and reuse, historic preservation manages change, revitalizes local economies, and helps shape the future of communities.

From the Heritage Foundation's plan, we see that the Foundation is taking the initiative to restore and repurpose this long-vacant complex of historically significant buildings, a remarkable investment in the future of downtown Franklin. Woven throughout this project is a commitment to telling the full history of the site and the local community, creating a place that is vibrant, authentic, and welcoming to all. Alternatively, underutilized properties tend to wither and die, undermining adjacent neighborhoods. Adaptive reuse combined with inclusive outreach is a highly strategic best practice in historic preservation, employed successfully across the country, that activates historic properties with productive new uses and strengthens communities.

Adjacent to the historic buildings, the Heritage Foundation plans to construct a new facility, The Hall, which will be compatible in scale and design with the site's historic buildings, and that is intended to serve the public as an educational and event center. Constructing architecturally sympathetic new infill buildings, like The Hall, adjacent to historic structures is another best practice in our field. As the regulatory process moves forward and the design of this building is more fully developed, The Hall will present a great opportunity to model exemplary new design within a historic cultural landscape.

According to the Heritage Foundation's plan, the stream of revenue earned through events at The Hall — limited to 250 people gathering for 80 events per year — will enable the Heritage Foundation to preserve and maintain the historic buildings, to

create and sustain expansive green space and designed gardens, and to make accessible the five-acre property to the public, visitors and residents alike. The Heritage Foundation's pragmatic and dynamic mixture of new, productive uses is another best practice in historic preservation known as "shared use." The National Trust and many other responsible stewards of historic properties work hard to establish and sustain a mixture of educational, interpretive, and income-producing commercial uses at their historic properties.

As planned, Franklin Grove will benefit the public with community-serving educational, art, cultural, and entrepreneurship programming. We encourage the Heritage Foundation and its neighbors to maintain a continuing dialogue as issues arise and are resolved during permitting, construction, and operation of Franklin Grove.

After reviewing the Heritage Foundation's plan, the National Trust for Historic Preservation supports the Foundation's vision for the Franklin Grove Estate & Gardens, which builds upon the Foundation's outstanding work, exemplified by the Downtown Franklin Association and historic Franklin Theatre. We look forward to sharing news of your Franklin Grove project with the national historic preservation movement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Nieweg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rob Nieweg
Vice President, Preservation Services & Outreach
National Trust for Historic Preservation