

WORLD HERITAGE CITY NEWS

A Publication of Global Philadelphia Association
and the World Heritage City Project

PRESERVING & CELEBRATING

GPA Leads National Historic Landmark Group Tours to Historic Johnson House and Independence Seaport Museum

As part of Global Philadelphia’s new National Historic Landmarks Site Visit series—designed to connect historic and preservation leaders while fostering collaboration—the Historic Johnson House was the first stop on the list. This National Historic Landmark, located on the main street of Historic Germantown, holds significant importance in the early abolitionist movement for civil rights and has strong ties to early Quaker settlements and industry. The site visit program invites leaders and enthusiasts from our vibrant historical and preservation community to experience a guided tour of selected landmarks.

Cornelia Swinson, Executive Director of the Johnson House, graciously hosted a warm reception and arranged for an experienced tour guide to deliver a compelling lecture, followed by an in-depth tour of the site. During the lecture, our group of participants learned about the property’s origins as a wedding gift and its first owners, the Johnson family.

As Quakers, the Johnsons embraced a faith that fostered early support for civil liberties, particularly regarding race and ethnicity. We also explored the Underground Railroad network and the instrumental role the Johnsons played in helping countless African Americans escape from the South to freedom.

Throughout the tour, we examined architectural details that provided historical evidence of the house’s role as a significant stop on the Underground Railroad. Our guide explained the resources available to the formerly enslaved individuals upon

arrival at the Johnson estate, and demonstrated how they identified the house by a signal light in the attic roof.

Several leaders in historical preservation and education joined us on this visit, representing esteemed institutions such as Carpenters’ Hall, the Please Touch Museum, Cliveden, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Athenaeum, and Laurel Hill Cemetery. Touring a historic site alongside fellow enthusiasts offered a unique opportunity to piece together Philadelphia’s interconnected history.

To continue GPA’s NHL Site Visit series, our team led a tour to the two NHL sites at the Independence Seaport Museum. This engaging field trip drew a number of esteemed guests and local preservation leaders, all united in their commitment to deepening public understanding of Philadelphia’s remarkable past and strengthening the network of 67 NHLs across our World Heritage City.



Located directly on the banks of the Delaware River, the USS Olympia and the USS Becuna are centerpiece exhibits of the Seaport Museum and offer an extraordinary glimpse into America’s maritime history. These vessels tell a layered story of Philadelphia’s evolving role as a naval and industrial power, from the age of William Penn through the global conflicts of the 20th century.

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Commissioned in 1895, the USS Olympia is the oldest surviving steel warship in the world and a defining artifact of the late 19th-century naval arms race. A protected cruiser of the U.S. Navy, Olympia gained international fame as Commodore George Dewey’s flagship during the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898—the opening salvo of the Spanish-American War. Equally compelling is the USS Becuna, a World War II-era fleet submarine affectionately dubbed the “Tiger of the Sea” by her crew. Commissioned in 1944 and deployed to the Pacific theater, Becuna completed five war patrols under the command of Henry D. Sturr, sinking an estimated 18,000 tons of enemy shipping.

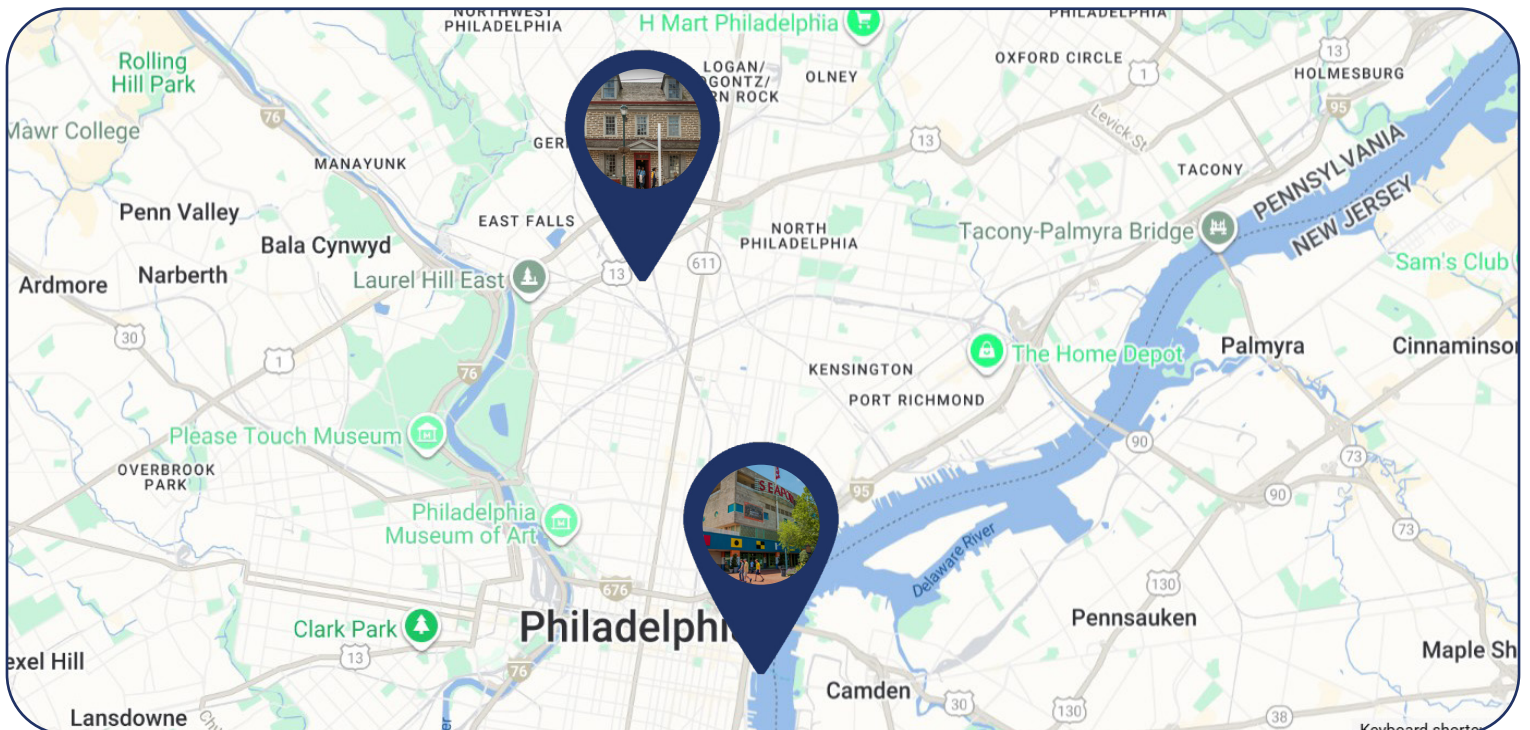
shift rotations—highlighting the grit and ingenuity required for underwater warfare.

Beyond these two vessels, the Independence Seaport Museum offers robust educational programming. From hands-on boat-building classes to SAILOR and Youth Ambassador opportunities for high school students, the museum remains committed to cultivating the next generation of stewards for maritime heritage.

Aboard the submarine, visitors on the field trip learned about the intensely confined environment and demanding conditions endured by the 80-man crew. The tour offered insights into daily life aboard a wartime submarine—from torpedo operations to

For those eager to understand the roots of American naval history, along with Philadelphia’s vital role in it, a tour of the USS Olympia and USS Becuna is not to be missed. These vessels stand not only as relics of war, but as reminders of national service, sacrifice, and innovation, anchored in the waterways of the Delaware.

NHL Site Visits



IDMS 2025: Honoring Landmarks and Stories That Define a City

Each year, GPA joins cities around the world in celebrating the International Day of Monuments and Sites (IDMS), an International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) initiative dedicated to raising awareness about cultural heritage. Locally, Philadelphia's IDMS events highlight the city's rich historical assets and showcase the ongoing commitment to historic preservation and education.

GPA and its partners hosted multiple events this year at notable National Historic Landmarks (NHL) sites across the city, engaging the public through tours, talks, and interactive programs. The 2025 celebration brought together community members, historians, and visitors alike to recognize Philadelphia's central place in both national and global heritage.

Participants explored Philadelphia's layered history through immersive tours of sites like Congress Hall, where rangers shared stories of early American politics in the very chambers where Washington once walked. At Stenton, visitors learned about James Logan and the life of Dinah, an enslaved woman who protected the home during the Revolutionary War, highlighting both privilege and injustice.

The tour of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church traced the origins of the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation, emphasizing the church's role as a spiritual and civic hub. In Fairmount Park, stops at Woodford Mansion, Memorial Hall, and Shofuso revealed the city's cultural range—from 18th-century opulence to international influences. Additional visits to Germantown and Rittenhouse Town deepened the conversation around preservation and early industry.

Philadelphia's IDMS events embody the mission of Global Philadelphia Association: to celebrate, preserve, and advocate for the city's cultural heritage. By bringing stories like those of Congress Hall and Stenton to a broader audience, GPA connects Philadelphia's local history to the global dialogue about identity, resilience, and collective memory.



International Day of Monuments & Sites 2025 [Schedule of Events]

- » Visit Independence Hall – A UNESCO World Heritage Site
- » Woodford Mansion: Global Threads of the Naomi Wood Collection
- » Wagner's Free Institute of Science Landmark Site and Exhibit Hall Tour
- » Architecture Adventures Open House at Founders Hall
- » Campus Architecture & History Tour for Int'l Day of Monuments and Sites
- » Liberty or Death: Revolutionary War Patriots
- » Stamp Rally and Scavenger Hunt Launch at Johnson House Historic Site
- » Free Tours at Stenton Museum
- » Mother Bethel AME Church and Museum Tour
- » Junior Ranger Day at Independence National Historical Park
- » Banners of Liberty: An Exhibition of Revolutionary War Flags
- » Visit Elfreth's Alley!
- » Spring Fest at Historic Rittenhouse Town
- » Parkside and Centennial District Walking Tour

19 Total Featured Sites!

IMDS 2026: Saturday, April 18, 2026

If you or your organization is interested in taking part, please contact gary.wooten@globalphiladelphia.org.

Global Philadelphia Celebrates Moravian Bethlehem's UNESCO World Heritage Status Designation

As of October 17th, 2024, the Moravian Church Settlements in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania officially joined the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List. UNESCO recognizes 10 acres, nine structures, four ruins, and the cemetery of Bethlehem settlements. Moravian Bethlehem is the 26th World Heritage Site in the United States and the third in Pennsylvania, joining Independence Hall and Falling Water. This designation not only celebrates the site's cultural and historical significance but also promises to boost tourism and regional pride, much like the impact of the World Heritage designation on Philadelphia. Global Philadelphia Association, a driving force behind Philadelphia's designation as a World Heritage City in 2015, played an essential role in advocating for Bethlehem's nomination and success.



EDUCATION

Philadelphia Unveils Sustainable Development Goal Exposition at Jefferson Station, Highlighting the City's Commitment to a Greener Future

The Philadelphia Sustainable Development Goals Campaign is more than just an awareness project—it's a movement. The SDG campaign represents an initiative aimed at bringing community awareness and action to sustainability. The city is uniquely positioned in this international effort, as it is the first city globally to spearhead an SDG awareness project of this kind. Over the next two years, 17 neighborhood walls will be decorated with SDG-inspired artwork, turning public spaces into vibrant displays of sustainability. Local non-profit organizations will also receive donations for each SDG mural.

The release of SEPTA's Sustainability Playbook in April 2024 demonstrates SEPTA's unwavering commitment to environmental, social, and economic best practices. The exposition highlighted how they are building on the SEPTA-TAINABLE 2020 plan, charting a course for a sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and connected public transportation system over the next seven years.

This initiative wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. From educational institutions to healthcare providers, from financial services to retail giants—their diverse backing reflects the universal importance of these goals. Their commitment to promoting sustainability in Philadelphia is painting a brighter future for our city. We would also like to thank our Board Member Leah Douglas, C.M., and Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) who first created the SDG exhibit for display in the airport.



PHL World Heritage Week 2025: Celebration Grows for 10th Anniversary



World Heritage Week May 18th - 24th, 2025

- » Founder's Day Weekend 2025
- » Introducing Julian Abele in Philadelphia
- » Charles Warren Stanley '67 Memorial 5K
- » Latin American Market & Soccer at FDR Park
- » Tea with Martha Washington
- » East Falls Tour
- » CPHI Kick-off & Welcome Reception
Navigating PHL's Regional Life Sciences Landscape
- » Malcolm X #100 – 60th Annual Malcolm X Day Pilgrimage
- » Always Enough: A Global Food Memoir | Booktalk & Tasting Event
- » AAPI Heritage Month Celebration at Shofuso Japanese House & Garden
- » World Trade Center Global Trade Summit
- » From Manila to Wall Street | Booktalk with Butch Meily
- » World Heritage City Day Flag Raising Ceremony
- » Celebration of Philadelphia Artists
- » Ode to Joy: Beethoven's Symphony No. 9
- » Philadelphia Museum of Art Guided Tour: Collections of Asia, Limited Galleries 2025
- » A Deeply Rooted Trolley Tour
- » Littlest Streets East of Broad Tour
- » KARMEN GEÏ Screening
- » World Heritage "No Sew" Doll Craft Activity
- » Africatown History: Lecture Series

AWARENESS & OWNERSHIP



GPA, in collaboration with several community partners, celebrated the city's 10th annual World Heritage Week this past May—featuring the most events in its history.

From Sunday, May 18 to Saturday, May 24, WHW 2025 featured 21 events celebrating Philadelphia's status as the United States' first World Heritage City. The programming included art demonstrations, community conversations and city tours, among other festivities.

"World Heritage Week is really an exemplar of Philadelphia as a place of great internationalism—which is lived very naturally," GPA President Zabeth Teelucksingh commented. "It really is a part of the way the city functions."

WHW 2025 welcomed a range of guests, including city officials and local leaders. Many events were also accessible to the public.

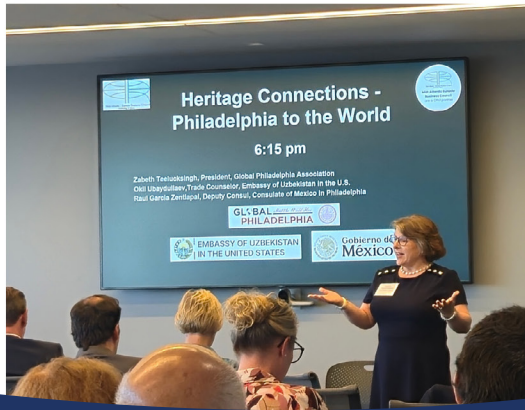
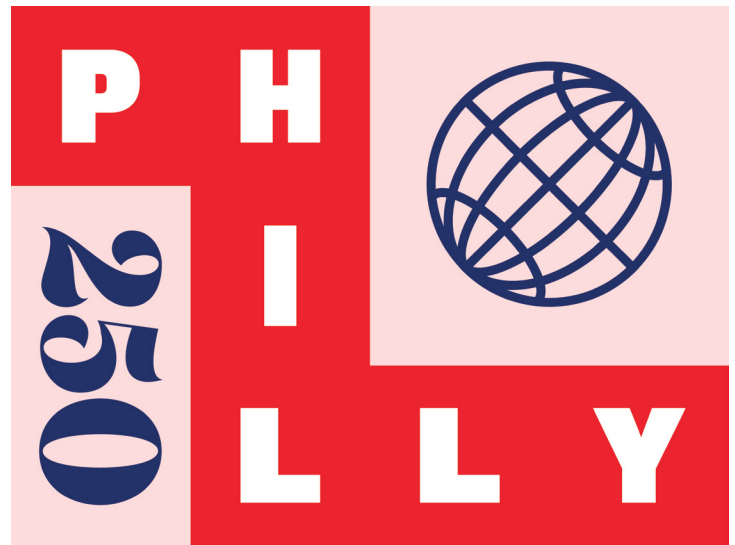
As the week progressed, programming also included multiple conferences and speaker events, ranging from topics such as Philadelphia's role in the international life sciences industry and Malcolm X's legacy to global cuisine and Asian American Pacific Islander heritage.

The hallmark of every WHW is the World Heritage City Day Flag Raising Ceremony, in which GPA and the city of Philadelphia hoist the Organization of World Heritage Cities flag outside City Hall. During the raising, community speakers urge attendees to reflect on the city's rich history.

The second half of the week was just as impactful as the first, featuring a range of arts-based events at iconic Philadelphia locations, along with more city tours and speakers.

Reflecting on the success of WHW 2025, several GPA members said they hope to continue shaping Philadelphia's global identity while celebrating its multiculturalism. As the city's 250th anniversary approaches, the association will continue to honor communities that "might otherwise go unnoticed," Zabeth said.

In 2026, Global Philadelphia Association will expand its annual World Heritage Week into a month-long World Heritage Month Celebration, in honor of the city's 250th anniversary. This special edition will feature an extended series of events showcasing Philadelphia's global culture, international communities, and World Heritage City designation. In collaboration with local organizations, media partners, and the Office of the City Representative, the celebration will spotlight Philadelphia's diverse heritage through storytelling, food, art, and history. If you or your organization is interested in taking part, please contact gary.wooten@globalphiladelphia.org.



World Heritage Week 2025 Community Partners

- » African Cultural Alliance of North America
- » Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia
- » Africatown Philadelphia
- » City of Philadelphia
- » Council of Indian Organizations in Greater Philadelphia
- » Francis M. Maguire Art Museum
- » Free Library of Philadelphia
- » Girard College Alumni Association
- » Girard College
- » Harriett's Bookshop
- » Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia
- » Laurel Hill Mansion Historic Philadelphia Park House
- » Mid-Atlantic Eurasia Business Council
- » Philadelphia Film Society
- » Philadelphia Parks & Recreation
- » Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- » St. Joseph's University
- » Temple University
- » The African American Children's Group Project
- » The Literary Cafe
- » The Literary Media and Publishing Consultants
- » The Philadelphia Orchestra
- » World Affairs Council of Philadelphia
- » World Trade Center of Greater Philadelphia



Celebrating a Decade as North America's First World Heritage City

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of Philadelphia's designation as North America's first World Heritage City, GPA hosted a commemorative Flag Raising Ceremony at City Hall, followed by a community reception at the historic Masonic Temple. This milestone event honored a decade of global recognition, community engagement, and civic pride that this prestigious designation has brought to the City of Brotherly Love.

The celebration welcomed a diverse audience of residents, civic and community leaders, World Heritage Week partners, and GPA Board members. Together, they reflected on the significance of the World Heritage City designation, a title that continues to shape Philadelphia's identity and elevate its international profile.

A dynamic lineup of speakers emphasized the broad-reaching impact of the World Heritage City designation—from promoting tourism and supporting economic development to fostering cultural inclusion and strengthening historic preservation.

- **Zabeth Teelucksingh**, President, Global Philadelphia Association
- **Rob McNeill**, Board Chair, Global Philadelphia Association
- **Jazelle Jones**, City Representative, City of Philadelphia
- **Marilou Ehrler**, Chief of Resource Stewardship & UNESCO Coordinator, National Park Service of Philadelphia
- **Paul Steinke**, Executive Director, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- **Thomas Young**, President & CEO, World Trade Center Philadelphia
- **Rev. Dr. Lorina Marshall-Blake**, President, Independence Blue Cross Foundation
- **Valerie Gay**, Chief Cultural Officer, Creative Philadelphia
- **Michael A. Nutter**, Former Mayor, City of Philadelphia

The program also featured a moving artistic performance by Lauren Putty White, whose work captured the spirit of unity and creative energy that defines Philadelphia.

World Heritage Week reminds us of the power of shared history to bring people together, celebrate cultural diversity, and inspire civic pride. With continued public-private collaboration and community involvement, the city stands as a model of cultural richness, resilience, and international significance—an exemplary World Heritage City for the next decade and beyond.

GPA Young Professional Travel Series: How Global Experiences Become Growth Experiences

GPA's commitment to celebrating and upholding Philadelphia's World Heritage City status can sometimes feel abstract until you meet the people whose lives bring our mission to life. This idea is the basis of our ongoing Young Professional Travel series — a collection of Emerging International Journalism Program stories that highlight the narratives of young leaders who have leveraged their international experience to make positive change in our city. From administrators of the companies driving Philadelphia's development, to Eisenhower Fellows and members of our Young Professional Network, GPA uses these stories to show how international travel empowers local leaders to exchange ideas and build connections that elevate Philadelphia on the global stage. Explore the series at globalphiladelphia.org/global-conversations.

Young Professional Travel Article Series:

[From Dreams to Memories in South Africa: Daecia-jamè Borgia on the Power of Travel](#)

[OWHC Travels: Safety, Delight, and Modern Comfort in Historic Urbanity](#)

[Connecting Cities and Careers: Derek Green's Trip to Kathmandu, Nepal](#)

[Expanding Philadelphia's Global Footprint to India: Lessons from Eisenhower Fellow Drew Bergman](#)

[Leading with Global Perspective: Cynthia Figueroa's Travels and Work in Philadelphia's Communities](#)

[Global Travels and Equitable Development with Sylvie Gallier Howard](#)

[From basketball to business: How World Trade Center CEO Thomas Young is growing Philly's global profile](#)



GPA team gets a tasty preview of ACANA's new Africatown Food Tour

GPA joined ACANA Communications Director Kou Dolo in June for Philadelphia's new Africatown Food Tour ahead of its public launch. Participants sampled four local eateries while learning about the Africatown Initiative's goals for the neighborhood.

Since GPA's journey through Africatown, ACANA has opened the culinary experience to the public through WeVenture. Dolo said ACANA also collaborated with Visit Philadelphia for the launch.

GPA has supported Africatown for years — through media coverage, joint events and other initiatives. Our staffers said they enjoyed engaging with the “deep roots” of Philadelphia's African cuisine.

The tour began at Simply Good Food — a fixture of Southwest Philadelphia for 45 years and counting. The restaurant serves classic homemade dishes from the American South.

Stop two was Jam-Rock, a Jamaican halal restaurant owned by Umar Waite. He served oxtail over rice and vegetables — the restaurant's most popular dish and a nostalgic staple from his childhood.

Next was the 120-year-old Oteri's Italian Bakery. Irene, an employee of decades, welcomed guests with stories of working with generations of Oteris. On the counter sat a collection of brown paper bags filled with cannolis.

Dolo said ACANA and its partners are investing in Africatown to promote growth, unify the community and elevate African-owned businesses. Since launching the Africatown project in 2022, ACANA has continued building new initiatives — like its proposed Unity Marketplace.

“When a lot of people come to Philly, they mostly think of going to places like Chinatown or Old City — nobody ever thinks of going to Southwest,” GPA intern Saijatu Conteh said. “Initiatives like this are really empowering ... it makes people aware that the city has so much to offer.”

‘This is nothing new’: Annual Johnson House Juneteenth Festival celebrates Black unity, perseverance

On June 14th, hundreds made their way to the Johnson House’s Juneteenth celebration — browsing local vendors, learning about history and enjoying performances by community groups. Throughout the day, attendees, organizers and community leaders alike stressed the importance of recognizing Black history, especially with the festival’s 20th anniversary on the horizon and Philadelphia’s 250th alongside it. The Global Philadelphia Association supports the event annually with tabling and extensive media coverage.

Juneteenth, also called Freedom Day and Emancipation Day, commemorates the moment when the last enslaved individuals in the United States learned of their liberation. On June 19, 1865 — more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation — Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to notify the around 250,000 Black people, who were still being illegally held in slavery, that they were free.

Although Juneteenth didn’t receive recognition as a federal holiday until 2021, many Black communities have celebrated it for more than a century. At Saturday’s event, co-emcee Jeff Hart described the commemoration as “nothing new,” noting that the Johnson House — recognized as a National Historic Landmark for its role as a stop on the Underground Railroad — has hosted its own Juneteenth Festival since 2006.

“Not only is this our ‘welcome home,’ it’s a remembrance of our ancestors and all that they have gone through (in) their lives,” Hart said in his opening remarks, as two drummers behind him picked up the beat. “Over 200,000 were still kept in bondage two years after the Emancipation was signed. That is why we are here.”

Each year, the Johnson House transforms the historic, cobblestoned stretch of Germantown Avenue into a vibrant representation of Philadelphia as a whole — with booths from local businesses, lawmakers’ offices and organizations, including the Global Philadelphia Association. The array of colorful canopy tents also reflected the city’s multicultural roots, representing Black American, African, Caribbean and Latin American communities.



At the end of the stretch stood the festival’s main stage, where the Johnson House hosted a range of live performances. Early mainstage events included an African libation ceremony, several songs, remarks from local elected officials and a reading of the original Juneteenth declaration.

Coinciding with the performances and businesses tabling, the Johnson House also held several interactive activities — such as an informational “Spotlight Tour” contextualizing the home’s history.



World Heritage Congress in Cordoba Sparks New Vision for Philadelphia's Global Role

In a gathering of over 330 World Heritage Cities, the historic city of Cordoba welcomed delegates for the 17th biannual World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities from September 23–27. Among the attendees was the Global Philadelphia Association, representing Philadelphia with hopes of advancing its global presence and learning from world leaders. This marked Philadelphia's sixth Congress, expanding its international experience.

Representing Philadelphia were Zabeth Teelucksingh, GPA President, and Dr. Harold Yaffe, GPA Development Chair. They joined officials from over 51 cities to tackle one overarching goal: making heritage cities more livable. Under the theme, "The Livable City," attendees shared strategies to address climate change, urban planning, and sustainable mobility.

Founded on collaborative solutions, OWHC's mission is embodied in the Quebec Roadmap — an initiative launched in 2022 to guide World Heritage Cities toward sustainability through four focus areas: requalifying habitats, refreshing cities, transforming mobility, and regenerating urban environments. Each focus brought cities together in workshops that inspired actionable ideas, from reducing traffic in historic zones to expanding green space.

Discovering Heritage Abroad: Organization of World Heritage Cities Travelling Scholarship

Since 2018, the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) has offered young people aged 18-28 the opportunity to visit World Heritage Sites in North America and Europe through a €1,000 scholarship. This program, paused from 2020-2022 due to Covid, aims to provide young adults with direct experiences of World Heritage Sites and encourages them to share their journeys on the OWHC travel blog. Among the recent scholarship recipients is Aidan DeLuca, an architectural designer from Philadelphia with a strong interest in urban design. With the scholarship, Aiden visited Brussels and Berlin, focusing on the public health, safety, and amenities of these cities and comparing them with those of Philadelphia.

Outside the sessions, GPA connected with global leaders, including mayors from Morelia, Querétaro, Quebec City, and Dubrovnik, as well as city council members and urban planners. These connections strengthen Philadelphia's place within the OWHC network and open doors for collaboration.

The congress also highlighted Philadelphia's growing role within OWHC's North America and Northwest Europe Regional Secretariat. As a member, the city may soon host regional events or even the 2026 World Congress. GPA is also exploring workshops to exchange best practices on areas like youth engagement and climate resilience.

As Philadelphia looks ahead, GPA is encouraging support from city stakeholders — including the mayor, city council, and local institutions — to embrace this opportunity. By building on insights from Cordoba, Philadelphia can enhance its livability while ensuring its heritage remains an evolving part of its identity.

Global Stats

12

Countries visited

14

World Heritage Cities visited

6

Organization of World Heritage Cities World Congresses

11

Regional Secretariat Meetings and Trainings





Globy Awards 2024: Celebrating 10 Years of Global Leadership in Philadelphia

On Dec. 9, 2024, GPA celebrated a decade of recognizing outstanding individuals making a difference in Philadelphia for the 10th annual Globy Awards. Over 350 guests and past awardees gathered in The Westin's ballroom — celebrating six trailblazing Philadelphians for their commitment to the city's global transformation. The day was filled with inspiring speeches and hope for Philadelphia's future.

Awardees and presenters brought unique stories from their professional lives, detailing how they got to where they are today. Our 2024 Emcee, Aziza Shuler of CBS3, moderated the ceremony and introduced each awardee.

- **Community Leadership:** Della Clark, President, The Enterprise Center
- **Corporate Leadership:** Gregg Caren, President and CEO, Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau
- **Educational Leadership:** Erika H. James, Wharton School Dean, UPenn
- **Heritage and Preservation:** Samip Mallick, Executive Director, South Asian American Digital Archive
- **Sustainable Leadership:** Leslie S. Richards, Former CEO of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and University of Pennsylvania Professor of Practice at the Weitzman School of Design
- **Lifetime Achievement:** John F. Smith III, Global Philadelphia Association Founder and Civic Entrepreneur

The 2024 Globys was our most unforgettable event yet. From our humble origins at the Global Ideas Summit to achieving recognition as a World Heritage City, we have shown that local efforts can inspire global change.



FEATURE



Expanding Philadelphia’s Global Footprint to India: Lessons from Eisenhower Fellow Drew Bergman

Drew Bergman, a local leader and mental health advocate, upholds Philadelphia’s legacy. As a recent Eisenhower Fellow, Bergman traveled to India, where he explored innovative mental health strategies in hopes of bringing them back to his home city.

Nayab: Can you walk us through your professional career so far?

Drew Bergman: As CAO at OIC Philadelphia, I lead brand development, marketing, and philanthropic initiatives. Our mission connects individuals to future-proof employment with family-sustaining wages and growth opportunities.

My background includes becoming a mental health spokesperson after sharing my experience as a suicide attempt survivor. My first speech was to the entire student body at St. Joseph’s Prep in Philadelphia. By age 20, I delivered 200+ presentations annually, nationwide. I founded “A Celebration of Life: Philadelphia,” raising over \$500,000 for mental health causes over nine years.

NI: Can you tell us about your travels?

DB: They select ten (Eisenhower Fellows) across the United States. I’m the second youngest one of my cohort, and the only one from Philadelphia. The city’s leaders have all gone through this program at some point in their career. It was an incredible honor to be selected.

The fellowship started in Paris, where I spent three days. I met unbelievable former fellows doing incredible work — from people at the UN and the World Health Organization to those running refugee programs out of Ukraine.

My favorite meeting there was with the deputy general for the Dutch Ministry of Health. I spoke to him to ask questions: “What are the mental health implications that you’re experiencing in

communities? How are you working to address the workforce shortage of mental health professionals?”

From there, I went to India, which was the most incredible two weeks of my life. I covered more than 10,000 miles in India alone. I went from New Delhi to Mumbai to Bangalore to Chennai ... I was just blown away. The culture, the warmth, the hospitality. It was truly a remarkable experience.

One memorable visit was a breakfast with Nipun Vinayak, a former Indian government official, who hosted me in his home and introduced me to Dr. Hamid Dabholkar. Dr. Dabholkar is continuing the legacy his father established, centered on promoting anti-superstition and ... building community-based mental health initiatives in impoverished communities.

NI: Were you able to identify any links between Philadelphia and the places you visited? How do these connections inform Philly’s role on the global stage?

DB: In one of the hospitals that I visited, they had a statue of Elizabeth Lundy — a Philadelphian who founded the first occupational therapy school in India. “What are the odds?”

Philadelphia is consistently at the forefront of movements that shape the world, and our designation as World Heritage City is a testament to that legacy. But as we celebrate the status, let’s remember it’s a responsibility. How can we leverage this position to address pressing issues? We can’t take the backseat now.

2025 Key Dates

OWHC Regional Secretariat for Northwest Europe and North America in Luxembourg City, Luxembourg

September 22nd - 24th

SDG #16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

November 18th

Globy Awards

December 8th



SUPPORT OUR MISSION: