

**FRIENDS' HOME ASSOCIATION
STRATEGIC PLAN
2019-22**

*Approved by Friends' Home Association Board
May 2019*

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History and Mission

The history of the Friends' Home Association and the Penington Friends House begin in the Gilded Age at the end of the 19th Century. At that time, many in the New York Yearly Meeting were troubled by the inequities of New York City's growing chasm between rich and poor and particularly the housing conditions in which many New Yorkers dwelled. A committee of Friends formed a "Committee on Friends Boarding Home" in 1896 and proceeded first to lease (1897) and then to buy (1899) a brownstone near the 15th Street Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. That property--the Penington Friends House--is still the sole property of the Friends' Home Association.

Any visitor to the Penington is struck by the history and tradition of the establishment. Those interested in more background on the Penington and its ups and downs over its 120+ years are recommended to [A Little Peace of New York](#) ~ an excellent monograph produced around the time of the Penington's centenary. This monograph is available upon request from the management of the Penington.

For the purposes of the strategic plan, the most salient aspect of FHA's history is that its mission is essentially unchanged since its bylaws were drafted in 1897. The three-part mission of FHA has consistently been:

- to provide a home for Friends and those in sympathy with Friends;
- to make a home-like headquarters for Friendly people, where strangers and visitors may find a temporary boarding place at reasonable cost; and
- to furnish a place where Friends generally and Friendly people may meet as committees or individuals to confer or procure a meal.

A final note -- throughout this plan, the terms "the Penington" and "Penington Friends House" are used interchangeably for convenience and readability, as are the terms "Quakers" and "Friends."

Why Plan Now?

FHA's board – like most nonprofit boards – is comprised of an uncompensated group of volunteers drawn to FHA by its mission. The board currently consists of nine members drawn from various Quaker Monthly Meetings within the New York Yearly Meeting; board members have a variety of professional backgrounds in nonprofit management, real estate development, financial management, philanthropy, marketing, and other relevant disciplines. They also bring a varied set of life experiences and perspectives to their board service even while they share a common bond as Friends.

FHA's board has term limits and staggered terms, so by design the board will change over time. What will not change is the board's fiduciary responsibility to FHA and to ensuring that FHA can continue to meet its chartered mission.

FHA's current directors are well aware of the Penington's long history of accomplishments and the precious legacy that the FHA has established over more than a hundred years of service. At the same time, responsible stewardship impels the board to reflect periodically on the organization's mission, purpose and programs and to consider the current condition of the property, of management, and of the Penington's operating context to ensure that the organization's current programs are relevant and needed.

The sense of the board is that FHA came to this planning process from a position of relative strength. Current management (the Facilities Manager and Operations Manager) have been attentive and diligent in their duties and in communicating with residents and the board. The managers have also managed a series of recent physical improvements to the property (summarized in Appendix 3) that indicate that many (although not all) of the most pressing maintenance needs of the Penington have been addressed. Occupancy and rent collections at the Penington are strong. Moreover, the board has done work within the last decade to review the organization's by-laws, to implement rotation of board members and officers, and to address all compliance requirements.

Nevertheless, FHA's board entered the planning process with an ambition to improve on these strengths and to set ambitious goals for meeting its mission even more effectively in the future. As an organization motivated by Quaker faith, FHA seeks to enable residents, guests, and Friendly people to cultivate their inner light; the board would also like FHA and the Penington to address broader societal issues and needs. The process of clarifying objectives should help FHA not only to manage its limited resources more effectively, but also to communicate FHA's purpose and strategies more clearly and thereby engage more current and potential stakeholders towards similar purposes.

Strategic Planning Process

During the winter of 2018-19, the board of FHA decided that the residents and management of the Penington--as well as the board and external stakeholders of the organization--would be well-served by developing a multi-year plan for FHA. The board engaged a consultant (John Weiler) to guide the planning process and committed itself to a process that would be concluded by the middle of 2019.

The initial elements of the process were:

- a retreat of FHA's board and staff in February 2019;
- a committee met to refine FHA's mission statement - this committee reconfirmed the mission statement's three substantive elements (home, temporary boarding place, meeting place), but refined the statement's wording (see below)
- conversations and focus groups with residents, staff and Penington "alumni" (former residents, staff, and board members);
- more than a dozen confidential interviews with other stakeholders of the Penington (including other Quaker organizations and other mission-aligned organizations).

With inputs from these phases, the board determined that an appropriate planning horizon would be three years - through the 125th anniversary of the Penington's creation. Alternatives for FHA's future program directions and activities were presented to and considered by the Board, including a number that were dismissed or tabled for future consideration.

Once the Board discerned a common sense of FHA's future direction, the strategic plan was then fleshed out with two themes for FHA's work over the next three years (deepening Quaker identity and refining the model) and with the identification of key activities within each of the major three areas of mission-driven activity (home, temporary boarding place, meeting place).

Refining and Clarifying the Mission Statement

During the spring of 2019, the board of the FHA took on the work of refining and re-stating the mission of the Friends' Home Association. The Mission Committee had representation from FHA's board and current management. First, the committee confirmed that the basic elements of FHA's mission remained unchanged. The committee also decided that the mission statement should state more clearly that the Penington could act as a model for others and that the Penington is a means whereby Friends and others can cultivate their inner light and live in community according to Quaker principles. The restated mission statement, which FHA will use going forward is now:

The mission of the Friends Home Association of New York is to maintain a Home and Community that can serve as model for cooperative living, where Friends and guests can live, gather, and cultivate their inner light, consistent with Quaker practice and testimonies.

While the mission statement has been re-worded, the three major activities of the FHA remain the same: providing a home; providing a temporary boarding place; and furnishing a meeting place.

Themes for future work

Upon additional reflection, FHA's board determined that the organization should re-commit the FHA to two major themes of activity in the next three years:

- Deepening Quaker Identity; and
- Refining the Model.

Each of these cross-cutting themes derive from FHA's refreshed mission statement and are reflected in the each of the mission-driven activities identified in the plan.

The first goal - expressed as "Deepening our Quaker identity as an organization" cuts across each of the three mission-driven activities of the FHA - providing a home; providing a temporary boarding place; and furnishing a meeting place. While FHA has always identified as a Quaker organization, the board felt that more could and should be done to prioritize outreach to Quakers and Quaker organizations, to offer more programming at the house, and to encourage service to the broader community by the Penington and its partners.

The second goal of improving operations, management, and governance systems at FHA would benefit not only Penington residents, but also the broader community by enabling FHA to more successfully model the potential for other service-oriented cooperative residences elsewhere. FHA's board is clear, however, that its first priority is excellent and sustainable management of the Penington, without which FHA cannot effectively hold itself out as a model to others.

Mission-Driven Activity #1 - Home

1.A. - Improve outreach to Quakers and those of Friendly Persuasion

Possible activities:

- Build relationships with Monthly Meetings and other Quaker organizations
- Establish referral incentives for current Penington residents

Metrics of Progress:

- Number of referrals by Quaker organizations and meetings
- Number of Friends among Penington residents

1.B. - Support Quaker principles and Quaker identity at the Penington

Possible activities:

- Revise orientation materials and house rules
- Establish budget to support spiritual formation (including service programs) to benefit Penington residents and others

Metrics of Progress:

- Number and quality of service offerings
- Level of resident engagement in service projects
- Resident satisfaction (survey or qualitative feedback)

1.C. - Enhance and celebrate diversity among Penington residents

Possible activities:

- Broaden channels for marketing and outreach
- Revise orientation materials to stress welcoming and openness to many dimensions of diversity
- Offer training for board, staff, and residents
- Encourage participation in meetings at the Penington and beyond for those with diverse viewpoints

Metrics of Progress:

- Demographics of residents, management, and board members
- Number of trainings and attendance
- Resident satisfaction (survey or qualitative feedback)

Mission-Driven Activity #2 - Temporary Boarding Place

2.A. - Improve outreach to Quakers and those of Friendly Persuasion

Possible activities:

- Build relationships with Monthly Meetings and other Quaker organizations, especially those with fellowship and internship programs
- Ensure that rental rates are competitive with other short-term cooperative living options
- Explore the possibility of an internship/fellowship specifically for service with the Penington and its programs

Metrics of Progress:

- Number of referrals by Quaker organizations and meetings
- Number of Friends and those of Friendly persuasion among Penington boarders
- Quality of relationships with other mission-motivated organizations

2.B. - Identify priority populations for temporary boarders

Possible activities:

- Reach out to organizations serving asylees, displaced people, or other priority groups

Metrics of Progress:

- Number of residents and length of stay by referral source
- Feedback from permanent Penington residents and management

Mission-Driven Activity #3 - Meeting Place

3.A. - Increase awareness among Penington residents of Quaker activities elsewhere

Possible activities:

- Post schedule of Monthly Meeting activities and other Quaker organizations in common areas and on electronic bulletin boards

Metrics of Progress:

- Survey of attendance by Penington residents

3.B. - Improve coordination with Quaker organizations and other potential allies (including organizations with consonant social justice missions)

Possible activities:

- Form a management/resident committee to spread the word on the parlor as a meeting space

- Regularly market the space to 15th Street Meeting, other Quaker organizations in New York, Seafarers Home, FCNL, and others

Metrics of Progress:

- Number of meetings in parlor space and attendance at meetings (especially among Pennington residents)
- Satisfaction and repeat bookings from those sponsoring meetings

#4 - Cross-Cutting Theme - Refining the Model

4.A. - Improve board communication

Possible activities:

- Invite regular resident engagement and consider designated liaison(s)
- Clarify composition of FHA board and criteria for election

Metrics of Progress:

- Resident attendance at board meetings
- Timely distribution of minutes
- Resident satisfaction (survey or qualitative feedback)

4.B. - Improve transparency on finances

Possible activities:

- Circulate annual budget and annual audit
- Adopt policies for operating and capital reserves
- Share information on capital improvements

Metrics of Progress:

- Regular sharing of information (at least annually)
- Policies adopted and reserves funded

4.B. - Clarify respective responsibilities of board, management and residents

Possible activities:

- Draft explanation and share with liaisons and in minutes
- Include in revised resident orientation materials

Metrics of Progress:

- Revised orientation materials

Conclusion

FHA's board recognizes that three years is a relatively short time and that not all of these activities may be completed by the end of 2022 (the year of the Penington Friends House's quasicentennial celebration). Nevertheless, the process of identifying these objectives should at least help the board and others to measure progress and decide on any necessary course corrections.

The board also recognizes that the FHA is a dynamic organization - since the planning process began, new staff have been hired into management roles at the Penington and new members have been nominated for FHA's board. This is another reason to have a longer-term plan for the organization - to clarify directions that necessarily continue beyond the annual budgeting and planning cycle.

An important ancillary benefit of a public plan with measurable goals is that it will promote more transparency and accountability for FHA - among residents, volunteers, partner organizations, the FHA board and management.

Finally, the board hopes that publishing and sharing this plan can help prompt an increase in engagement with Penington residents, other Quaker organizations, other similarly motivated mission-driven organizations, and other potential stakeholders. The board is optimistic that with a more public statement of FHA's ambitions, others will see what the FHA can offer them and how their efforts can help FHA to achieve its mission for a broader social benefit.

Appendix #1 - Summary of Strategic Priorities

- 1 - Improve outreach to Quakers and those of Friendly Persuasion for permanent residents
- 2 - Support Quaker principles and Quaker identity at the Penington
- 3 - Enhance and celebrate diversity among Penington residents
- 4 - Improve outreach to Quakers and those of Friendly Persuasion for temporary boarders
- 5 - Identify priority populations for temporary boarders
- 6 - Increase awareness among Penington residents of Quaker activities elsewhere
- 7 - Improve use of the Penington as a meeting space by coordinating with Quaker organizations and other potential allies (including organizations with consonant social justice missions)
- 8 - Improve board communication
- 9 - Improve transparency on finances
- 10 - Clarify respective responsibilities of board, management and residents

Appendix #2 - Stakeholders Interviewed for Planning Process

Current Penington Friends House Residents (alphabetical)

- Holly Blasier
- Ge Gao
- Steve Greechie
- Emily Hey
- Brenda Kuciemba
- Daphne Makinson (subletter)
- Deborah Marinelli
- Michael McHugh
- Kathy Mitchell
- James Reed
- Lem Schaffer
- Vicky Southwell (subletter)
- AJ Stetson

Former Friends' Home Association Board members(alphabetical)

- Elizabeth Bailey
- Brad Greene
- Nancy Hadley-Jaffe
- Kristina Sibinga
- Jonathan Staiger

Organizational Stakeholders (alphabetical)

- Christine Ashley - Friends Committee on National Legislation, Field Secretary
- Ahmet Baydur - New York Quarterly Meeting, General Manager
- Raines Cohen and Betsy Morris - Cohousing Association, board members
- Brian Doherty - New York Quarterly Meeting, attorney
- Marsh Luther Drege - Seafarers International House, Executive Director
- Andrei Israel - William Penn House, Executive Director
- Steve Mohlke - New York Yearly Meeting, General Secretary
- Joan Shapiro - Penington House, former cook
- Michelle Shenk - Menno House, Manager
- Andrew Tomlinson - Quaker United Nations Office, New York Director
- Lewis Webb, Jr. - American Friends Services Committee, Healing Justice Program Coordinator

Appendix #3 – Recent Capital Improvements at the Penington Friends House

The last five to seven years have been a period of substantial capital improvements at the Penington. These have been managed by FHA's current Facilities Manager, Kathy Jaeger, who has also created an inventory of systems improvements and improvements to each of the rooms at the Penington. Below is an abbreviated inventory of capital projects undertaken since 2013 (in chronological order):

- Complete renovation of parlor, including full ceiling replacement, plaster work, painting & furniture re-finishing and replacement
- Refinishing of roof deck
- Significant renovation of all 14 bathrooms
- Installation of new water heater and boiler
- Windows replaced throughout
- Cellar renovation
- Installation of new kitchen exhaust system

In addition, FHA has recently commissioned and received a capital needs assessment for the next decade from a consulting engineer. This assessment details a set of anticipated capital expenditures (including a new roof) totaling approximately \$1.5 million over the next decade.