

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the National Endowment for the Humanities' Section 106 Review of the Pratt Museum Interior Renovations

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded the Pratt Museum a grant to preserve its humanities collections and provide for public access through renovation of the existing building. NEH is an independent grant-making agency of the United States government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. This public notice is issued as part of NEH's responsibilities under 36 C.F.R. Part 800, the regulations which implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 470. NEH, a funding agency, is required by regulation to identify and assess the effects of any proposed actions on historic properties. If any proposed action will have an adverse effect on historic resources, NEH works with the appropriate parties to seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects. Additionally, the Section 106 regulations require NEH to consider the views of the public on preservation issues when making final decisions that affect historic properties.

In a 2018 modification to the original grant application, the Pratt Museum proposed the following renovations. Please see attached, numbered diagram for the location of each proposed modification. Note that the list below is not sequential.

- (1) Removal of existing ramp and replacement with a mechanical lift.
- (2) Remove interior staircase to Special Exhibits Gallery and raise ceiling below.
- (4) Installation of a ramp that will connect the top level exhibit space with the marine gallery level, currently about seven steps down.
- (5) Removal of "crow's nest" storage space to accommodate the ramp.
- (7) Removal of remove the short wall and fire doors around the "northern foyer" exit.
- (10) The southernmost staircase will be eliminated.
- (11) Open wall to "production room."
- (12) Install a lift to accommodate for removal of ramps.
- (13) Using the southern foyer's current roof, build an enclosed deck on the south side.
- (14) Add access to enclosed deck via a new doorway.
- (15) The current southern foyer will be closed in to create new office space. (A new exit door will be created at #25).
- (19) Raise the ceiling of this space.
- (20) Remove wall
- (21) Add wall
- (22) Raise ceiling

(25) Replace existing door with smaller exit door.

The Pratt Museum is located at 3779 Bartlett Street in Homer, Alaska. The building was constructed as Homer Society of Natural History in 1967 as part of the Alaska Purchase Centennial and opened in 1968. Designed by Edwin B. Crittenden, the building features rough-cut spruce roof beams and distinct linear features that are characteristic of Crittenden's architectural style. In 1974 the museum was renamed to honor the museum's first curator and benefactor, Sam Pratt. It is not part of, or adjacent to, a known historic district.

The museum was assessed in July 2017 by Monty Rogers of Cultural Alaska and Caleb Billmeier of Wellspring Group in order to assess eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and offer a recommendation on whether the NEH and Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (AK SHPO) should decide the museum is eligible for the National Register. In a report dated July 5, 2017, Rogers and Billmeier recommend that the Pratt Museum be considered eligible under Criterion A at the local, state, and national levels for its association with the 1967 Alaska Purchase Centennial. In addition, they recommended inclusion under Criterion C at the state level for being the design of a master architect, Edwin Butler Crittenden.

On March 6, 2018, NEH requested that the AK SHPO office provide comments on eligibility under Criterion A and C. In a letter dated April 5, 2018, the AK SHPO **concurred** with the consultant report determining eligibility under Criterion A at the state level for its association with the Alaska Purchase Centennial project, and at the local level for its role as an education and public facility for the community of Homer. The AK SHPO **did not concur** that the building is significant at the national level, citing the construction date of 1967 being too far removed from 1867 event for a direct association. Moreover, AK SHPO **did not concur** that the Pratt Museum was eligible under Criterion C due to multiple additions and renovations to the original building, resulting in loss of those characteristics necessary to convey the design, workmanship, and association that the original construction would otherwise demonstrate.

In light of these determinations, the AK SHPO determined that "adverse effects to the historic property can be avoided and/or sufficiently minimized." This determination is dependent on review of final project design specifications.

As required by Section 106, NEH is providing the public with information about the proposed interior renovation project at the Pratt Museum, as well as an opportunity to comment on any knowledge of, or concerns with, historic properties in the proposed project area, and issues relating to the project's potential effects on historic properties. Comments may be submitted to the NEH by e-mail to FPO@neh.gov, or to National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Preservation and Access, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20506. The deadline for submitting comments is July 12, 2018.

Pratt Museum
3779 Bartlett Street
Homer, Alaska

Area of Potential Effect

