

# *Envisioning* VILLA LEWARO'S *Future*

By Brent Leggs



National Trust *for*  
Historic Preservation™



“I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the kitchen cook. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations.”

*Madam CJ Walker*  
*1912 National Negro Business*  
*League Convention*



# Envisioning VILLA LEWARO'S Future

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Executive Summary** ..... 2

**Introduction and Background** ..... 3

    Historical Significance ..... 3

    Architectural Significance ..... 4

    Ownership History ..... 4

    Initial Assessment of Development Considerations ..... 6

**Envisioning Possible Reuse Scenarios** ..... 8

    Scenario 1: Health & Wellness Spa and Salon ..... 9

    Scenario 2: Center for Innovation in Technology ..... 11

    Scenario 3: Corporate Venue and Events Management ..... 13

    Scenario 4: Residential Use ..... 16

**Recommendations and Conclusions: Process for Decision-Making** ..... 19

**Participant Biographies** ..... 21

**Appendices** ..... 25

    Floor plan ..... 25



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IN MAY 2014, THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION invited a small group of consultants, entrepreneurs, real estate developers, and preservationists to assist the National Trust in identifying reuse scenarios for Villa Lewaro, the estate of Madam C.J. Walker. The consultants participating in the visioning workshop were asked to identify innovative solutions for Villa Lewaro that would increase public access, ensure its financial stability as a historic site, and raise the visibility of Walker's legacy.

In the early 20th century, Madam C.J. Walker invented hair care products for African American women and developed a successful door-to-door business to amass considerable wealth and national prominence. In 1918, she built Villa Lewaro, her "Dream of Dreams" as a monument to inspire her race to reach its highest potential. This National Historic Landmark stands in Irvington, New York, as an elegant, historic residence that embodies the optimism and perseverance of American entrepreneurship, yet its future is uncertain.

After two decades of exceptional stewardship, the current owners, Ambassador and Mrs. Harold E. Doley, Jr., are ready to sell the estate, which is vulnerable without a long-term vision for continued preservation and legal mechanisms to ensure its protection. At this critical point, the Doley family is partnering with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to protect Madam Walker's legacy. For this reason, the National Trust designated Villa Lewaro as a National Treasure in April 2014. National Treasures are cultural heritage sites of national significance that are threatened in some way and would benefit from National Trust technical assistance to address the impending threat. The National Trust developed the following principles to provide a framework for discussions concerning the building's reuse:

- The stewards of Villa Lewaro should secure a financially sustainable and architecturally compatible use for the mansion to fund its restoration and maintenance.
- Preservation of Villa Lewaro should follow the highest preservation standards to retain the landmark's architectural and historical integrity.
- Protection of nationally significant historic sites like Villa Lewaro, using binding legal tools, is essential to preserve our shared cultural heritage for future generations.
- A reasonable level of public access and interpretation of Villa Lewaro is important to broaden the nation's understanding of the full stories of American history.

Workshop participants concluded that Villa Lewaro could be appropriately used for a non-residential purpose that is economically sustainable and compatible with the preservation of the site's character-defining features, and aligned with Madam Walker's legacy. These might include a health and wellness spa and salon, a center for innovation in technology, or a corporate venue and events management. The National Trust also concluded that Villa Lewaro could continue to be used as a residence and updated to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century needs, protected by an easement in perpetuity. The scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could contain elements that could be developed into a hybrid approach. Most important, future owners or users of Villa Lewaro will need to find creative ways to open the house to the public for increased interpretation of Walker's life.





## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently convened a visioning workshop to solicit ideas on ways to ensure a sustainable future for the Villa Lewaro National Treasure. The resulting Case Statement provides: (1) an overview of facts about historic Villa Lewaro, (2) a summary of three innovative reuse scenarios, as well as continued use as a residence, and (3) the National Trust's recommended next steps.

In 1917, the New York Times Magazine described Villa Lewaro a “wonder house” with a “degree of elegance and extravagance that a princess might envy.”

### Historical Significance

Madam C. J. Walker (Sarah Breedlove, 1867-1919) was born in Delta, Louisiana, on the plantation where her family was formerly enslaved. She rose above her circumstances to become a hair care industry entrepreneur and pioneer, philanthropist, preservationist, and activist. In 1906 Madam Walker founded the Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company. Her business created economic opportunities for African American women who were often limited to domestic work and farm labor in the early 20th century. She said, “I am not satisfied in making money for myself. I endeavor to provide employment for hundreds of the women of my race.” By the time of her death, she claimed to have trained more than 23,000 sales agents and beauty culturists in the United States, the Caribbean, and South America.

Madam Walker is recognized by many historians and biographers to be the first self-made American woman millionaire, and was honored in 1998 with a commemorative United States Postal Service stamp. From her humble beginnings in Louisiana, to her time establishing her business in St. Louis, Denver, Pittsburgh, and Indianapolis, to her final years in Harlem and Irvington, New York, Madam Walker's life is an inspirational American story. To display her wealth and to create a venue for entertaining her family and friends, Madam Walker built a 20,000-square-foot mansion and 4,000-square-foot carriage house overlooking the Hudson River. After visiting the property in 1918, Italian opera tenor Enrico Caruso named the home Villa Lewaro, using letters from A'Lelia Walker Robinson's name, Walker's daughter.

## Villa Lewaro National Historic Landmark Nomination

Architect Richard Dozier says, “Villa Lewaro demonstrates the architectural genius of Vertner Woodson Tandy.” Vertner Tandy (1885-1949) graduated from Tuskegee Institute and Cornell University before opening his architectural office, Tandy and Foster, in New York City. He designed many notable Harlem landmarks such as St. Phillip’s Episcopal Church (1910), Dr. Vincent’s Sanitarium (1918), the Open Air Theater (1920), Mother Zion A.M.E. Church (1921), Imperial Elks Lodge (1924), Ivey Delph Apartments (1948), and more. Tandy also designed Walker’s townhouse and beauty salon known as The Dark Tower in 1915. It was located at 108-110 West 136th Street, and demolished in 1941. He co-founded Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and is the first African American to pass the officers examination to become the first black lieutenant and commander of the New York National Guard. It was during his service in the National Guard in 1917 that Madam Walker commissioned Major Tandy to design Villa Lewaro.



### Architectural Significance

Built in 1918, Villa Lewaro is located at 67 North Broadway in Irvington, New York. Designed by Vertner Woodson Tandy (1885-1949), a Tuskegee Institute and Cornell University graduate, and the first licensed African American architect in New York, the three-story Italianate-style mansion and detached carriage house stands on just over 3 acres of sloping landscape. It is one-half mile from Jay Gould’s Lyndhurst, five miles from the Rockefellers’ Kykuit, and twenty-one miles from Manhattan.

Costing \$250,000 to construct, the 34-room house has a white stucco exterior and red tiled roof. The rear is a three-level, concrete and tiled terrace that leads to the estate’s swimming pool. Villa Lewaro’s interior has an open and spacious feeling with a side stairwell; seven bedrooms; seven bathrooms; a paneled billiards room; herringbone and marble floors; and coffered, arched, and hand painted ceilings throughout the first floor. The music salon is the grandest room with its ornate pillars wrapped in gold leaf, two crystal chandeliers, and original \$25,000 Estey organ. While there are very few original furnishings from the period, the property is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity. In 1976 Villa Lewaro was designated a National Historic Landmark.

### Ownership History

When Madam Walker died in May 1919, the home was bequeathed to her daughter, A’Lelia Walker, for a lifetime interest. While Walker’s will stipulated a desire to transfer ownership to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), by mutual agreement between the Walker Estate and the NAACP, the home was sold in 1932 to fund the organization’s mission and activities. Acquired by Anna E. Poth and the Companions of the Forest of America, and years later by Ingo and Darlene Appel, the property has been used as a retirement home and private residence.

Since 1993, Ambassador and Mrs. Harold E. Doley, Jr., have owned and lived at Villa Lewaro and invested significant resources to restore it. Upgrades were made by the Doley family to the mechanical, electrical, heating, and plumbing systems. Important character-defining features such as the terra cotta roof were reconstructed with materials from the original manufacturer. Historic windows were restored or reproduced and original artwork was conserved by professional art conservators. The swimming pool was retiled and the carriage house was converted to residential use.



## National Treasure Designation

Villa Lewaro was designated a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to recognize its architectural and historical significance. National Treasures are cultural heritage sites of national significance that are threatened in some way and would benefit from National Trust technical assistance in areas such as advocacy, marketing, legal assistance, preservation planning, and development to address the impending threat. Whereas Villa Lewaro is in good hands today, the National Trust's objective is to look ahead to help protect Villa Lewaro from future, adverse alterations and demolition, while also making it more available to the public, guaranteeing its financial stability as a historic site, and enhancing public appreciation of Madam Walker's life and contributions.

In 1917, Madam Walker organized the first annual convention of the Madam Walker Beauty Culturists Union in Philadelphia. At the 1924 convention, sales agents and beauty culturists pose for a picture at Villa Lewaro.

After 21 years of meticulous stewardship, the Doley family is partnering with the National Trust to explore legal protection for the property and to developing long-term solutions for Villa Lewaro's continued preservation. This collaboration led to Villa Lewaro's designation as a National Treasure in April 2014. On behalf of the City of Irvington, the Honorable Mayor Brian Smith proclaimed May 5, 2014 as the Ambassador and Mrs. Harold E. Doley, Jr., Day to recognize their past and present stewardship of historic Villa Lewaro. The National Trust is grateful to Ambassador and Mrs. Doley for preserving one of the premiere African American and women's history sites in America.

On May 6, 2014, the National Trust held a one-day visioning workshop entitled Re-Imagining Villa Lewaro to identify three solutions for reusing the property, in the context of the National Trust's mission and goals. The National Trust developed the following preservation principles to provide a framework for discussions concerning the building's reuse:

- The stewards of Villa Lewaro should secure a financially sustainable and architecturally compatible use for the mansion to fund its restoration and maintenance.
- Preservation of Villa Lewaro should follow the highest preservation standards to retain the landmark's architectural and historical integrity.
- Protection of nationally significant historic sites like Villa Lewaro, using binding legal tools, is essential to preserve our shared cultural heritage for future generations.
- A reasonable level of public access and interpretation of Villa Lewaro is important to broaden the nation's understanding of the full stories of American history.

In Tarrytown, New York, hosted by the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the National Trust convened nine participants including entrepreneurs, preservationists, and real estate developers from Boston, Chicago, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Advice from these consultants helped to expand the National Trust's thinking about the future of Villa Lewaro. The results of the workshop and this Case Statement provide guidance on future plans for the site and may help lead the current owner and interested partners to identify appropriate uses for Villa Lewaro.

## Initial Assessment of Development Considerations

Developed by the National Trust, any viable scenario must adhere to these considerations.

**Neighborhood Context:** Formerly the most expensive zip code in the United States, Villa Lewaro's neighborhood is an established and quiet residential district with a mix of historic and modern houses. Nearby is the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, restaurants, and a small shopping district. Villa Lewaro is currently zoned residential, but an exemption for "educational" and "religious" use is allowed. It can be challenging, however, to establish a historic site or house museum within a residential neighborhood since neighbors might be concerned about the increased driving and foot traffic created from non-residential uses.

**Landscape:** Physical and natural resources create a distinctive setting for Villa Lewaro. The historic elements, which include views to the Hudson River and Palisades, stone and iron fences, swimming pool, trees, driveway, and other unique features, should be preserved. The walking path at the rear section of the estate is part of Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park, which is owned by the State of New York. Continued use/reuse planning should include a strategy to preserve and capitalize on these historic attributes.

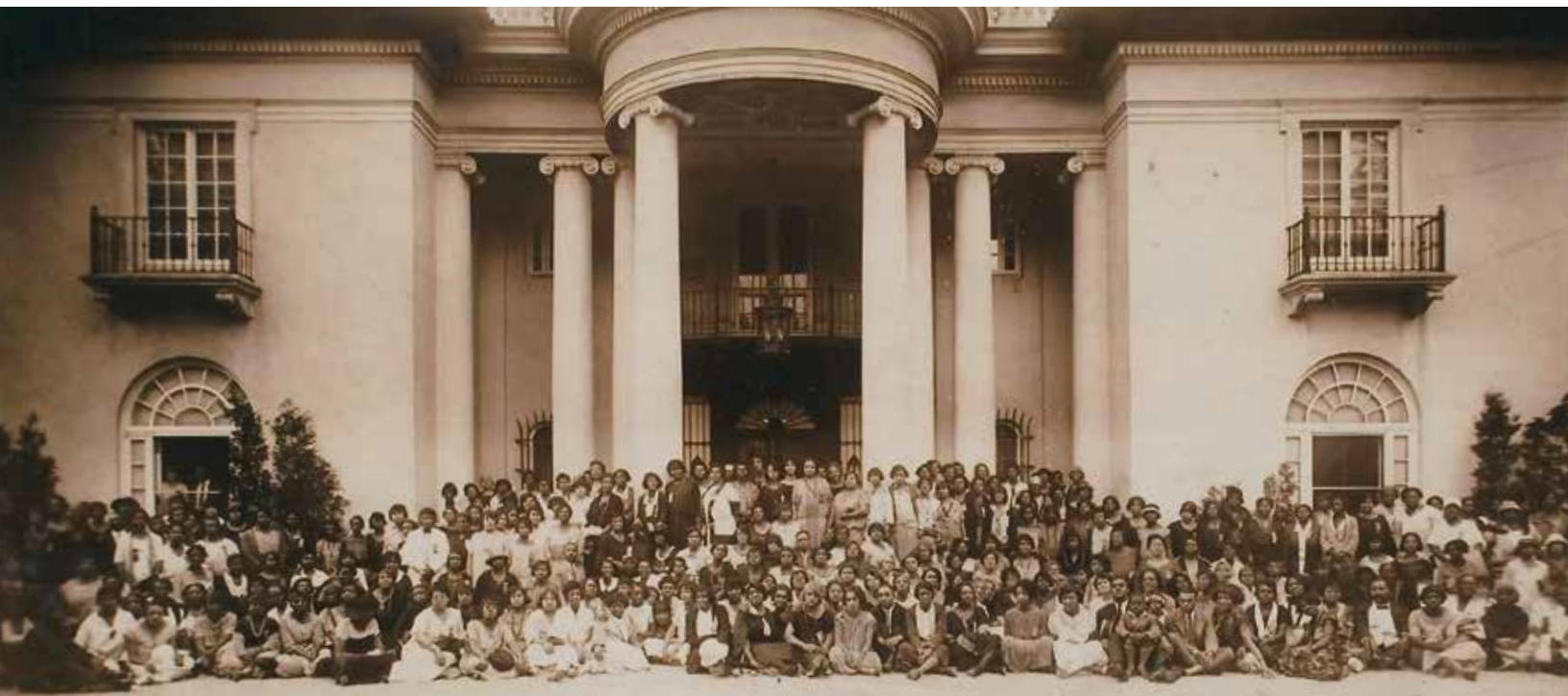
**Historical Designation:** Villa Lewaro is a designated National Historic Landmark and possesses exceptional value in interpreting the heritage of the United States. Only 2,500 historic places have earned this national distinction and fewer than 100 are designated for their contributions in African American history. Designation can often build broad support, but it does not automatically provide preservation funding or protect the property from adverse alterations and demolition. Plans for Villa Lewaro should follow The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (36 CFR Part 68) in order to preserve the historical and architectural integrity of the property.

**Easement:** A preservation easement is a legally binding contract that ensures that the historic appearance will be retained in perpetuity by requiring future owners to attain approval from the easement holder in regard to proposed changes to the building. The National Trust and Historic New England are prepared to negotiate the terms of an appropriate easement with Villa Lewaro's future owner. The owner may also qualify for a federal tax deduction equal to the value of the easement donation. The easement protecting the mansion should restrict major modifications to the exterior, first floor, and stairwell by subsequent owners. Secondary spaces such as the carriage house, basement, and third floor may be adaptively used for new purposes.

**Economic Incentives:** Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits are available to private, for-profit developers for the substantial restoration or adaptive use of historic buildings for commercial use. The use must generate income to qualify for this tax incentive. The National Trust encourages the future owner to work with the National Trust Community Investment Corporation to evaluate the amount of equity available from using the 20 percent investment tax credit.

**Transportation:** On-site parking is limited and can accommodate approximately 15-20 cars. The Irvington area is accessible by train, bus, and air. From New York City, visitors can ride the Metro North-Harlem Line from Grand Central Terminal, which is a 35-minute, one-way trip to Irvington. The house is less than one mile from Irvington's train station, and public transportation options are available and easily accessible, but a plan for parking may be needed to support non-residential uses.





Generally, the first question posed by the public is “Why not a house museum?” In the context of Villa Lewaro, this is an appropriate question. In the National Trust’s experience with its portfolio of 27 historic sites, house museums are best supported by local governance, creative partnerships and uses, and an endowment that is large enough to cover ongoing costs of restoration and maintenance, especially for a property of the size and quality of finishes and craftsmanship found at Villa Lewaro.

Beyond the National Trust’s portfolio, the home of Louis Armstrong (1901-1971), one of the world’s most famous musicians, is preserved in Queens, New York, as a house museum, and operated by a coalition of supporters. Through a three-party agreement with the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Queens College, and the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, the museum is on sound financial footing. These partnerships are essential to ensure the long-term viability of the site.

Since admission fees cover only a portion of the operating costs, the stewards of a house museum must also successfully raise funds year round. For example, the American Association of State and Local History reports that house museums earn \$8 per visitor, while it costs on

Madam Walker’s principles for her business was corporate responsibility, social betterment, and racial justice.

average \$40 per person to operate the business. House museums survive by establishing co-stewardship agreements with partner organizations and agencies to share the costs of operations and maintenance.

Villa Lewaro’s residential setting also requires a plan to control how visitors access the site. Visitors could arrive at an off-site visitor’s center such as Lyndhurst and be shuttled to the house in small groups. A similar approach is taken at the National Trust’s Philip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. Without an established endowment, fundraising capacity, and committed partners, however, financial sustainability at this scale will be difficult to achieve at Villa Lewaro. The result would be an under-resourced house museum and failed business which would jeopardize the long-term integrity of the landmark.

*To learn more about the Louis Armstrong House Museum and other preservation models, please read the National Trust’s publication [http://www.preservationnation.org/forum/library/public-articles/PB\\_AfricanAmericanSites.pdf](http://www.preservationnation.org/forum/library/public-articles/PB_AfricanAmericanSites.pdf) Preserving African American Historic Places.*

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## Reuse Ideas Generated on May 6th

Art gallery and performance venue || Foundation or corporate headquarters for small businesses || Corporate retreat and temporary housing for corporate employees || Centers for entrepreneurship, leadership, business, and/or technology || Materials conservation laboratory to train preservation trades professionals || Historic hotel or bed and breakfast || Satellite campus or exhibition space for collections at historically black colleges and universities || Secondary education boarding school or day school || Film, art, and music studio || Writer's retreat and artist-in-residence program || Historic house museum interpreting multiple themes || Rental venue for conferences (TED Talks), cultural events, private parties, and weddings || Health and wellness center (yoga, meditation, spa and salon) || Sustainable food venue (restaurant, product development, test kitchen, and culinary club for foodies) || Retirement home || Library || Time share for cultural and academic institutions || Cosmetology school || Summer institute for youth or African American women || Think tank || Business and technology incubator for emerging companies

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## ENVISIONING REUSE SCENARIOS

The visioning workshop for Villa Lewaro started with a brainstorming session called Visioning without Limitations. The nine consultants discussed a long list of ideas, both conservative and ambitious, and then selected the top five scenarios for further consideration. Reuse scenarios are listed in order of ranking.

**Health & Wellness Spa and Salon**

**Center for Innovation in Technology**

**Corporate Venue and Events Management**

**Cultural Arts Performance Venue**

**Agricultural & Culinary Food Venue**

After selecting the top three scenarios, the consultants debated the following questions in order to fully understand the viability of these scenarios: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the site?

What types of development opportunities would respect the site's architectural and historical significance?

Who is the audience/s and market/s for the project?

Should the property be privately owned, operated by a nonprofit, commercial business, or a hybrid approach?

What is the strategy to build support to launch the project?

What are the critical factors for success?

How should the deal be structured? Who are the potential investors? What partnerships are needed?

What are the next steps to advance the project?

The top three reuse scenarios were expanded, refined, and then pitched to a hypothetical investor. This exercise led to productive discussions and good ideas for the future of Villa Lewaro. Independent of the consultant's view, the National Trust included a fourth scenario, residential use. A summary of each scenario is presented on the following pages.



## SCENARIO 1: HEALTH & WELLNESS SPA AND SALON

Under this scenario, the proposed primary use for Villa Lewaro would be as a luxury spa and beauty salon to provide a range of services and products in skin and hair care, spa treatments, cosmetics, and personal grooming. Secondary uses would be as a small, boutique hotel for patrons of the spa and salon and an educational component on green living. The core concept is to create a venue for social and spiritual retreat to serve a community of like-minded individuals. The consultants appreciated how closely aligned the proposed use is to Madam Walker's legacy because of her career as a hair-care and cosmetics entrepreneur.

Consultants envisioned the first floor as a beautifully decorated public space where guests can gather between spa services and served meals in the dining room. The second and third floors could provide areas for spa and salon services. The consultants recommend an on-site hospitality function that would offer food and beverages to guests visiting Villa Lewaro. The basement can be converted into a small, state-of-the art exercise and yoga studio with locker rooms for patrons of the spa and salon. The swimming pool could function as a sauna in the fall and winter. Approximately five-to-seven high-end bedroom suites for overnight guests could be located in the carriage house. All areas of the mansion and carriage house should be retrofitted to enhance energy performance and to meet the required building code requirements.

The music salon, also known as the "Gold Room," features pilasters wrapped in gold leaf, hand painted ceilings and murals, classic herringbone flooring, and crystal chandeliers. An automated Estey organ piped music throughout the house.

### Audiences & Owners

- The consultants identified several key audiences such as middle-class and affluent African Americans, New York City businesswomen, married couples, and the adult dating population for romantic retreats.
- The consultants suggested potential investors might include respected spa and salon sole proprietors with access to capital, corporate beauty and cosmetics companies that celebrate diversity, mission-driven investors and developers, and Health & Wellness institutes.

The consultants identified several pros and cons regarding the proposed scenario.

### **Pros**

- Villa Lewaro's physical appearance should be maintained to allow for an authentic visitor experience. This scenario should also permit indoor and outdoor programming such as guided tours and/or other forms of interpretation.
- Replicable business models such as the SOHO House in the United Kingdom, Salamander Spa and Resorts, and Canyon Ranch in Lennox, Massachusetts, could be used to help investors understand the potential of this site as a spa.
- The New York City metropolitan area has a stable economy, diverse audiences to solicit, and accessible public transportation.

### **Cons**

- A zoning variance would be required to implement the scenario. If approved, the consultants expect that neighbors might have concerns about a commercial business in the residential district. They also anticipate significant investments would be needed to upgrade the plumbing systems for commercial use and for the required code compliance.
- The scenario caters to an upscale clientele. Soliciting this niche audience might be perceived negatively by the media and by African Americans without the resources to patronize the spa and salon.
- A spa and salon might require additional parking to accommodate the number of expected visitors at Villa Lewaro. Construction of the required parking spaces could potentially compromise the mansion's landscape.

### **Critical Factors for Success**

- An ambitious marketing strategy would be needed to reach the target audience.
- Mission-driven investors with proven track records would need to assume all management responsibilities for the site.
- A strategy to move customers to and from Villa Lewaro and the Irvington train station would be needed.

### **Additional Information Needed To Continue Exploration**

- The consultants recognize that the operators of this type of business at Villa Lewaro should investigate the realistic market potential, both nationally and internationally, and consider the impact to the mansion from alterations.
- The consultants suggest that the future stewards develop a list of potential commercial developers and solicit their advice about the scenario's potential.

Madam Walker expressed her reason for building such a majestic home by telling her attorney that she wished to have a place to entertain her friends. Building on her vision, the consultants think this scenario can provide a similar experience for customers of the salon and spa.





## SCENARIO 2: CENTER FOR INNOVATION IN TECHNOLOGY

Under this scenario, the proposed primary use for Villa Lewaro would serve as a multi-purpose space to house young technology companies, or alternatively, as a think tank for up to 10 innovators to develop new ideas and research. The secondary use would be as a technology training lab to provide classes in computer programming and software development. The consultants anticipate strong earning potential through a cooperative agreement with the in-house technology companies and from the tuition fees charged for trainings. The consultants appreciate how the property might inspire technology enthusiasts and offer them the rare opportunity to develop new products in Madam Walker's home.

This scenario could accommodate two or three emerging technology companies housed in the basement and on the second and third floors. The think tank would be an in-house residency program where rising innovators could occupy the entire house and use the second floor's private spaces as sleeping quarters. In either strategy, the first floor could function as shared, public and social spaces for lounging, reading, and informal meetings. A small gym, kitchen, and dining area could be accommodated in the basement. The carriage house could also be converted into a small, modern technology center to support youth and adult programs. All areas of the mansion should be retrofitted to improve energy performance, to meet the current building code requirements, and to accommodate audio and visual equipment.

### Audiences & Owners

- The consultants identified broad audiences that include technology professionals from African American and diverse communities, social entrepreneurs, and women.
- The consultants think this scenario has the potential to attract support from a range of investors such as corporations, emerging professionals, academic institutions, innovators, foundations, nonprofits, philanthropists, and impact investors funding social ventures.

Madam Walker said about her home, "I am surrounded by all my dreams come true." From the side entrance, marble floors transition into the main hall with its intricately carved medallions set in the room's hand painted, coffered ceilings.

The consultants identified several pros and cons regarding the proposed use.

### **Pros**

- The site's inspirational history and beautiful setting should attract innovators who seek a social and collaborative environment for a sabbatical. The program could be sustained through academic, corporate, and institutional partnerships, and help to highlight innovation within the African American community.
- With an anticipated 12- to 18-month operational business model, the consultants suggest that investors, foundations, and companies such as Google, Microsoft, and others might be motivated to acquire an equity position in the emerging technology companies.
- Significant revenue potential is anticipated from the training lab. For example, the consultants suggest that the business might offer a 12-week course in front end JAVA & HTML programming and charge \$12,000 - \$16,000 per training (front end programmers earn from \$65,000 - \$90,000 annually). Profits can be used to restore and maintain Villa Lewaro.

### **Cons**

- Technology firms typically locate in dense urban markets, where public amenities are available 24 hours a day. In addition, the size of space of the buildings and distance from New York City might limit the scale of business.
- Significant investment is needed to implement the scenario. A visionary developer is needed to advance reuse planning and to select the right management to assure short-term and long-term success.
- Potential negative impacts to the mansion from electrical upgrades for state-of-the art technology amenities need further exploration.

### **Critical Factors**

- Success, in this scenario, will require visionary leadership and advocacy to implement the project.
- Documenting the social justice impact created from the scenario could lead to increased support.
- Future owner should explore partnership opportunities with potential impact investors and emerging technology companies housed at Villa Lewaro to underwrite operations. Through an agreement, each company would share a percentage of its profits with the owner to build an endowment.

### **Additional Information Needed To Continue Exploration**

- The consultants recommend forming a steering committee to refine the concept.
- The consultants recognize the need to evaluate the financial and spatial feasibility of this scenario.
- The consultants suggest building a list of prospective investors to cultivate their interest for seeding the redevelopment project.

Madam Walker wanted Villa Lewaro to be a monument to “convince members of her race of the wealth of business possibilities” available to African Americans and “to inspire them to do big things.” Building upon Madam Walker’s vision, the consultants encourage the future owners to strategically engage diverse technology professionals and entrepreneurs to help realize Madam Walker’s legacy.



### SCENARIO 3: CORPORATE VENUE AND EVENT MANAGEMENT

Under this scenario, the proposed primary use for Villa Lewaro would be as a corporate venue for meetings and conferences. Secondary use would be as a private venue for weddings and formal events. The consultants see opportunities to generate multiple income streams from leasing the property to cover the operations and ongoing maintenance. As a formal events venue, Villa Lewaro could become a destination for weddings, parties, and retreats, which is consistent with the estate's historic use.

This scenario envisions small conferences and meetings with ancillary break-out rooms located on the first and third floors. These flexible and intimate spaces can be smartly designed to create a functional, high-end experience for the clients. The second floor of the mansion and carriage house can be used to offer overnight accommodations for approximately 20 guests. Sections of the basement could be renovated into a small commercial kitchen and dining area. The consultants recommend an on-site hospitality function that would offer food and beverages to guests visiting Villa Lewaro. The mansion and carriage house could also be retrofitted to enhance the building's energy efficiency, and modified to meet the current building code and audio and visual requirements to attract today's corporate and private clients.

#### Audiences & Owners

- The consultants believe there may be strong interest from African American and women-focused cultural institutions such as the NAACP, the Urban League, the National Association of Minority Architects, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women for conferences and meetings.
- The consultants see the potential to solicit African Americans and women for weddings and other corporate events. They suggest that corporate and celebrity audiences might include the Oprah Winfrey

At the 1918 National Negro Business League's annual convention, Architect Vertner Tandy thanked Madam Walker for contributing "more to architecture for Negroes than any person or group of persons in this country."





Madam Walker said, "Villa Lewaro was not merely [my] home, but a Negro institution that only Negro money had bought." On the north side of the mansion, the informal entrance and covered driveway leads into the main hall.

Network, Carol's Daughter Holdings, Flavor Unit Entertainment, Tyler Perry Studios, Essence Communications, Bad Boy Records, etc.

The consulting teams identified several pros and cons regarding the proposed use.

### Pros

- Multiple revenue streams can help to increase financial sustainability. Interested parties and developers can learn from similar redevelopment projects, such as those that take place at the Aspen Institute, the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Loeb Fellowship at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.
- Increased access by the public allows more Americans to experience Villa Lewaro's rich history and to reflect on the innovative culture embodied in the estate.
- The scenario should not negatively affect the site's historical and architectural character. A minimal amount of modifications would be needed to implement this scenario.



## Cons

- On-site parking is limited. A plan would be needed to consider alternative ways to get visitors to and from the site.
- A commercial kitchen in the basement to support a limited hospitality function would increase the amount of trash generated by the site and require adding a dumpster.
- There is strong competition in the area from the Tarrytown House, Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Lyndhurst, and other venues that also offer conference and meeting facilities.

## Critical Factors for Success

- The consultants anticipate that the meeting and conference revenue may be enhanced as soon as the hospitality strategy for the property is agreed upon. Packaging of day or week-long conferences as well as overnights by corporate or institutional customers could be maximized by the experienced commercial developer.
- The current owner recommends a conceptual business strategy where the Divine 9, African American fraternity and sorority organizations, and National Beauty Culturist League, might enter into co-stewardship agreement. They could form an LLC, proportionately invest in the business, and co-manage the facilities for high-level board meetings, small conferences, and fundraising events. The consultants discussed the importance of strategic and innovative partnerships to achieve economic sustainability.

## Additional Information Needed to Continue Exploration

- The consultants recognize the need to evaluate the financial feasibility of this scenario.
- The consultants encourage interested parties to seek advice from similar businesses to learn from their marketing and operational strategies.
- The consultants observe the need to identify an investor/developer to advance reuse planning for this scenario.

Madam Walker saw Villa Lewaro as an institution to improve opportunities for African Americans and wished to provide a gathering place for conferences on the important topics of the day. Building upon Madam Walker's vision, the consultants think it is appropriate to establish Villa Lewaro as a cultural institution. They would encourage future owners to create a mission statement that focuses on entrepreneurship, social justice/activism, design, and cultural heritage to honor the site's history.



Historically, the 4,000 square foot carriage house was constructed as a three-car garage and living quarters for Madam Walker's chauffeur and handyman. The building has been converted into two apartments.

## SCENARIO 4: RESIDENTIAL USE

Another scenario, which was not part of the brainstorming workshop, but is still worth exploring, is to continue to use the building as a private residence. Under this scenario, the primary use would be as a privately-owned historic residence as an owner-occupied bed and breakfast (B&B) with legal covenants to safeguard the property's historical and architectural integrity. Private ownership is a proven, low-risk option for many historic sites. The potential rental income from leasing the carriage house's two apartments or from profits earned by the B&B could fund ongoing preservation projects. The future owners should have significant financial capacity to properly care for the estate.

The large basement kitchen and the first floor's formal dining and entertainment areas would be well suited for a large family or as a second home for a wealthy buyer. There is plenty of space in the mansion that can be adaptively used for contemporary needs without significantly altering the historic character of the house. The restrictions from the easement, in part, will maintain the site's historic and architectural significance, and thereby, help to maintain Villa Lewaro's market value. The property should be opened to the public on a limited annual basis for tours, which would be negotiated as part of the easement agreement.

### Audiences & Owners

- Future owners might be professional athletes, celebrities, and high net worth individuals who want to share a moment in history in the perpetual stewardship of historic Villa Lewaro.
- The National Trust is open to a partnership to accomplish the acquisition and protection of Villa Lewaro, to protect the property with an easement, and to then lease or sell the property to a responsible steward for residential use.

The National Trust identified several pros and cons regarding the proposed scenario.

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National Trust President Stephanie K. Meeks says that “tools such as easements and transfer of ownership can be very effective options for protecting the irreplaceable. Legal easements guarantee protection, access, and integrity, and offer a solid foundation from which to start.”

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The intimate, formal dining room has arched ceilings, recessed lighting, and whimsical murals of sea sprites and mermaids. The French doors open onto the three-tiered terrace, swimming pool, and gardens.



## Pros

- The first floor has an open floor plan, which should be attractive to today’s buyers. In the basement, there is a large updated kitchen and additional rooms that can be renovated to meet the needs of the home owner.
- The new owners would play an instrumental role in the future stewardship of Madam Walker’s legacy.
- Schools in Westchester County and Irvington are nationally ranked, which would be attractive to families with children.

## Cons

- Villa Lewaro is a multi-million dollar property. Acquisition costs and annual operating expenses are considerable. Properly maintaining a historic building at this scale requires an ongoing commitment to the site’s preservation.
- Highly designed interiors on the first floor will be protected with an easement. An easement may reduce the number of potential buyers.

## Critical Factors for Success

- Stakeholders would need to identify the right steward, which is critical for financial sustainability and for the quality of the management. Future stewards should be guided by a master preservation plan and follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- A smart and strategic marketing strategy should be developed to solicit interest from successful African Americans, women, real estate developers, and business leaders.

## Additional Information Needed To Continue Exploration

- Stakeholders should develop a prospect list and cultivate preservation-friendly and financially capable individuals and institutions for co-stewardship opportunities.
- Interested parties should discuss Villa Lewaro’s future with respected real estate developers such as the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust and the Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation, the Salamander Hotels and Resorts, the Conservation Fund, and the Rebuild Foundation.

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## On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C. J. Walker

With the construction of her estate, Madam Walker created a monument dedicated to her life and to inspire her race to its highest potential. In her will, she said: “The madam is grateful to her Creator that he has permitted great good to flow uninterruptedly to her. In turn she will give the beautiful palace in trust to her race, after the life of herself and that of her daughter. As she thinks of it now it will be held in memoriam of her—a museum or monument—where in after years members of her race may pilgrimage to it, prodding him to renewed energy because of the realism of such a grand result.”

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Madam Walker hoped her home would be “left to some cause that will be beneficial to the race—a sort of monument.” To build upon Madam Walker’s vision, the National Trust supports Villa Lewaro’s continued use as a privately-owned residence, its historic use, with some degree of public access to inspire all Americans that experience this national treasure.

The top three scenarios were unanimously selected by the consultants. The other two were eliminated for reasons explained below, however, the Cultural Arts Performance Venue scenario should also be explored for its potential.

**Cultural Arts Performance Venue:** The proposed use for Villa Lewaro would be as an intimate performance space that celebrates emerging and world-renowned artists. The consultants envision artists creating contemporary art to interpret the property’s role in the Harlem Renaissance and Madam Walker’s and A’Lelia Robinson’s guests such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neal Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Marcus Garvey, and others. They acknowledge how important it would be to collaborate with top American and international artists, nonprofits such as the Jazz Gallery, art galleries, and celebrities to reach new audiences and maximize the investment potential. This scenario was given a lower ranking because the inherent space limitations of the building and site would make it difficult to scale to financial sustainability. The Arts venue on a limited scale could supplement one of the other scenarios.

**Agricultural & Culinary Food Venue:** The proposed use for Villa Lewaro would be as a sustainable food venue. Concepts around food agriculture, environmental sustainability, product development, and a test kitchen for foodies needed further exploration. The consultants were uncertain about the long-term financial outcomes and anticipate significant investment to implement the idea. They were also concerned about the increased risk of fire and the constant wear and tear on the historic buildings. The consultants cited an example of the successful redevelopment of the Blue Hill at Stone Barn restaurant at Kykuit as a model. Exploring partnership opportunities with the Culinary Institute of America located in Hyde Park, New York, the Food Network, and celebrity chefs would increase the redevelopment potential. This scenario was given a lower ranking because of the spatial limitations of the building and site and the anticipated need for substantial alteration for code compliance. The Food scenario on a limited scale could supplement one of the other uses.





## RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS: PROCESS FOR DECISION-MAKING

Based on the suggestions of the nine consultants and the expertise and experience of the National Trust staff, the National Trust recommends the following next steps to continue the evaluation of the three most viable scenarios considered at the workshop, and the potential for continued residential use. Additional concepts such as an exhibition space to showcase the extensive historical documents and collections housed at HBCUs or an arts and cultural venue to interpret Villa Lewaro's role in the Harlem Renaissance should also be explored. The information attained from these reports will inform the future owners about Villa Lewaro's prospective for redevelopment. Recommended next steps for action should include:

**Easement:** The future owners should work with the National Trust and Historic New England to prepare a draft preservation easement to protect the site, exterior, and interior of Villa Lewaro. The owner and the easement holder would negotiate the levels of restrictions to the property, with enough flexibility to accommodate contemporary uses.

**Appraisal:** The stakeholders or interested parties should hire an experienced appraisal firm to evaluate the loss in market value for placing the easement, to identify the anticipated charitable tax deduction that may be available for the easement donation, and to determine Villa Lewaro's current market value. The acquisition price has not been negotiated with the owner, but the expected market value is anticipated to be between \$5 and \$7 million, with annual operating expenses and property taxes of \$145,000.

**Conduct a Condition Assessment:** The stakeholders or interested parties should hire a qualified preservation architect or engineer to assess and prioritize needed repairs for the two historic buildings and to estimate the cost to maintain the property for 5 to 20 years. This assessment is a road map to guide future restoration work at Villa Lewaro.

Madam Walker's attorney Freeman Ransom wrote that Villa Lewaro is "a monument to the brain, hustle and energy of this remarkable woman, and a milestone in the history of a race's advancement." Guests enter the mansion's historic blue doors, which opens into the main hall.

**Conduct a Market & Economic Feasibility Study:** The stakeholders or interested parties should test assumptions made in the visioning workshop by assessing the potential market and economic value of each scenario. A respected business consultant will evaluate and recommend an economically viable scenario, which will set the foundation for a financial business plan.

**Through this Case Statement, the National Trust concludes:**

- It is both appropriate, and indeed responsible, to explore potential residential, commercial, educational, and institutional uses for historic Villa Lewaro. Each compatible nonprofit, for-profit, and shared-use scenario would increase public access and have normal risks that are inherent in starting a new business venture. The scenarios are not mutually exclusive and could contain elements that could be developed into a hybrid approach.
- Villa Lewaro may continue to be used as a residence, protected by an easement in perpetuity. It is certainly appropriate to use a historic house as a residence and to update it to serve the needs of 21st-century residents.
- Villa Lewaro also could be appropriately reused for a non-residential purpose that is economically sustainable, compatible with the preservation of Villa Lewaro's character-defining features, and aligned with Madam Walker's legacy. Conservative revenue and profit projections would be attractive to mission-driven investors seeking long-term returns on their investment.
- Any future owner/user of Villa Lewaro, residential or nonresidential, should find creative ways to open the house to the public for interpretation of Walker's life and legacy. Increased public access is important to the legacy of the site and should be strongly considered regardless of use.

Madam C. J. Walker is an important person in American history. The protection and preservation of her home is a fitting tribute to her accomplishments and the artistry of architect Vertner Woodson Tandy. Villa Lewaro is an iconic historical and architectural landmark worthy of preservation, and Madam Walker's remarkable life becomes real when visitors experience her home. Its history continues to expand our sense of national identity and will enrich future generations to come. The National Trust's campaign to help protect Villa Lewaro, to promote continued use/innovative reuse, and to raise public awareness is worthy of support.

We are thankful to the Doley family for their partnership and foresight to plan for their transition as caretakers of the property. We also acknowledge our preservation partners, consultants, and steering committee for their good thinking as we work to secure national recognition for Madam Walker's legacy and the continued preservation of the Villa Lewaro National Treasure.



## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

### **Carlton A. Brown, *New York City***

Carlton Brown is COO of Full Spectrum—a national leader in the development of sustainable buildings for urban markets. His projects focus on creating regenerative communities in which the environment, equitable economy and human culture are each valued. Brown is a 1973 graduate of Princeton University’s School of Architecture and Urban Planning. His experiences include site acquisition; facilities development; project design; strategic planning and financial feasibility analysis. Brown has served on several boards including the NY Chapter of AIA, US Green Building Council, Global Green US, Broadway Housing and 651 Arts. He serves as an adjunct faculty at Pratt Institute’s Graduate Planning Program and is a faculty member for the Rose Center of ULI. Brown was honored by the AIA as the 2013 Samuel Ratensky Lecture Fellow.

### **Amina Dickerson, *Chicago***

Amina Dickerson founded Dickerson Global Advisors, a coaching and consulting practice that grew out of a 35-year career in the nonprofit, corporate and philanthropy sectors. Dickerson garnered her expertise through executive posts with Kraft Foods, the National Museum of African Art —Smithsonian Institution, the Chicago Historical Society, and the DuSable Museum of African American History. She also works with the philanthropic community and nonprofits on leadership advancement, transition and succession planning, scenario thinking and program development. Dickerson studied theater at Emerson College, holds a certificate in arts management from Harvard University, and a M.A. in arts management from the American University. She serves on the boards of The Woods Fund of Chicago, the Lloyd Fry Foundation, and the Women’s Funding Network.

On June 13, 1918, Madam Walker spent her first night at Villa Lewaro. In *On Her Own Ground*, Madam Walker is said to be “intent upon positioning Villa Lewaro as a venue for both social enjoyment and political debate.” On August 25, 1918, she hosted the Honorable Emmett J. Scott, Assistant Secretary of War, at the estate.



**Kathryn Finney, *New York City***

Kathryn Finney is the founder and managing director of digitalundivided (DID), a social enterprise that develops programs that increase the participation of urban communities, especially women, in the digital space. DID's programs have reached over 4 million people. In 2013, Finney received the Champions of Change Award from The White House for her work in increasing inclusiveness in tech. An honors graduate of Yale and Rutgers Universities, Finney is an expert in building women-centered online properties and is a frequent speaker at venues as diverse as The White House and South by Southwest (SXSW). She was named one of AOL's Top Women in Money and Black Enterprise's "40 Stars Under 40."

**Robert Horsford, *Harlem, New York***

Robert Horsford is the president and CEO of Apex Building Company. He started Apex in 1997 and has built over 1,000 units of affordable housing throughout New York City. APEX is a Harlem-based full service general contracting & real estate development company. It grew out of Horsford's family business, Victor Horsford Realty, started by his grandfather in 1945. Before Apex, Horsford was the project manager on a \$1.5 billion global construction projects for Verizon and served as project manager for Gilbane. He currently serves on the board of Ddirectors for the Greater Harlem Real Estate Board and the New York State Association for Affordable Housing. Horsford holds a B.S. in Structural Civil Engineering and Business Management from Brown University.

**Kellee James, *Washington, D.C.***

Kellee James is founder and CEO of Mercaris, a market data service and trading platform for organic and non-GMO agricultural commodities. Prior to Mercaris, James spent five years at the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX), the first electronic trading platform for environmental derivatives. In 2009, she was appointed by President Barack Obama as a White House Fellow. James was named by Black Enterprise Magazine and Crain's Chicago Business Magazine as a '40 under 40' rising leader. James is an Aspen Institute Catto Environmental Fellow and a non-resident senior fellow at the Joint Center for Political & Economic Studies, an African American think tank. James received her M.B.A. and M.A. in International Development from American University and a B.A. in Spanish from the University of Kentucky.

**Jean Brownhill Lauer, *New York City***

Jean Lauer is founder and CEO of Sweeten.com, an award-winning website that matches home and small business owners with renovation needs to the best architects, designers and general contractors for their projects. Currently the site, which she launched in 2011, hosts over \$60 million in construction projects in the New York City area and was named "Best Contractor Locator" by New York Magazine's Best of 2012. Lauer earned a B.A. from The Cooper Union and in 2011 was one of nine winners of the prestigious Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. While there she co-founded the African American Student Union, where she currently sits as the organization's chair.

**Keith L. Magee, *Boston, MA***

Keith Magee, FRSA, is a distinguished senior research fellow on race, religion and poverty at the University of Birmingham, England. As the founding director for the National Public Housing Museum and the Center for the Study of Housing and Society in Chicago, Magee has given international attention to this platform.



He has fostered a new dialogue on social justice issues and increased equity for diverse communities. He aims to illuminate and interrupt the cycles of poverty through research, art and culture, thereby promoting community development principals. Magee was a key strategist and senior religious affairs advisor in Ohio for both of President Obama's campaigns. Magee trained at the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown and Harvard Divinity School.

### **Meredith Sorin Horsford, *New York City***

Meredith Horsford is executive director of The Gracie Mansion Conservancy. In this role she is responsible for creating public programs, overseeing restoration projects and fundraising for the organization. She previously served as deputy director of the Historic House Trust (HHT) of New York City where she was the primary liaison between the New York City Parks Department and the privately operated nonprofit organizations that administer 23 historic house museum sites in city parks. Horsford previously served as the director of Property Stewardship and Acquisitions and manager of Historic Sites at HHT. She is also a Peer Reviewer for the 1772 Foundation, conducting site visits and making recommendations to the Board on funding historic preservation and African American history projects. She holds a B.A. from the State University of New York College at Geneseo and a M.A. from the University of Delaware.

### **Moddie Turay, *Washington, D.C.***

Moddie Turay is managing principal and CEO of Moddie Turay Company (MTC), which he founded to focus on mixed-use development on innovative urban infill projects. Before founding MTC, Turay was a development manager for Western Development Corporation. He worked directly with Chairman and CEO Herbert S. Miller. Before joining the private sector, Turay served as the special assistant to Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, D.C. As a close advisor to the mayor, Turay played a pivotal role on numerous economic development initiatives and in outreach to community stakeholders. In 2010, he was asked to serve as Industry Specialist to the U.S. General Services Administration. Turay received a B.S. in Business Management from St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina.

### **Co-Facilitator: Gregory Farmer, *Chicopee, MA***

Gregory Farmer, principal of Agricola Corporation, has a professional background in the documentation, preservation and management of historic buildings, sites, structures and collections. A graduate of the State University of New York (B.A. in American Studies and M.A. in History/Museum Studies), Farmer has more than 20 years of successful experience working with public, private and nonprofit clients throughout the Northeast. He is a licensed construction supervisor in Massachusetts and exceeds the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards in the fields of history and architectural history.

## **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

### **Jacqueline Johnson, *Washington, D.C.* – Co-facilitator**

Jacqueline Johnson is the manager of Conferences and Training in the Preservation Division, where she manages educational content development and logistics for National Trust conferences and training events. She also coordinates the programmatic activities of the National Trust Diversity Scholarship Program to build a network of diverse emerging professionals and community leaders in historic preservation. Prior to the National Trust, Johnson worked on a contract basis as a professional development training manager and office manager for the

American Association for Affirmative Action. She also worked as a paralegal in the real estate practice group of Morgan Lewis & Bockius, an international law firm. Johnson holds an M.A. in Development Anthropology from George Washington University and a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Old Dominion University.

**Brent Leggs, *Washington, D.C.* – Co-facilitator and author of *Envisioning Villa Lewaro’s Future Case Statement***

Brent Leggs is the senior field officer in the Washington, D.C. Field Office. He is a Harvard Loeb Fellow and the author of *Preserving African American Historic Places*. He developed the Northeast African American Historic Places Outreach Program, and its theme, the Business of Preservation, to build a regional movement of preservation leaders saving important landmarks in African American history. He is the project manager for three National Treasures: Joe Frazier’s Gym in Philadelphia, Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, New Jersey, and Villa Lewaro in Irvington, New York. Brent holds an M.B.A. from the University of Kentucky.

**Rob Nieweg, *Washington, D.C.* – Co-facilitator**

Rob Nieweg has worked as a preservation advocate since 1989, when he directed Landmark West, a citizens group on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. Rob joined the National Trust in 1995 and has helped save historic places and strengthen the preservation movement in Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Utah, West Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Virginia. Rob is the director of the Washington D.C. Field Office where he leads the National Trust’s work to preserve three National Treasures: Washington’s Union Station, Fort Monroe, and Washington National Cathedral. Rob holds a B.A. in history from Vassar College, an M.S. in historic preservation from Columbia University, and a J.D. from the University at Buffalo Law School.

**Madam Walker/A’Le’lia Bundles Family Archives**

**Ms. A’Le’lia Bundles, *Washington, D.C.***

A’Le’lia Bundles is at work on her fourth book, *The Joy Goddess of Harlem: A’Le’lia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance*, a biography of her great-grandmother, whose parties and arts patronage helped define the era. *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*—A’Le’lia’s biography of her great-great-grandmother—was named a New York Times Notable Book. She was a network television news executive and Emmy Award-winning producer for 30 years at NBC News and ABC News. She currently is chair of the Foundation for the National Archives board, a Columbia University trustee and president of the Madam Walker/A’Le’lia Bundles Family Archives.

**Steering Committee**

A’Le’lia Bundles, Judy Clark, Gregory Farmer, Gail Fuller, Charles Granquist, Beverly Morgan-Welch, Christian Sottile; Gretchen Sullivan Sorin

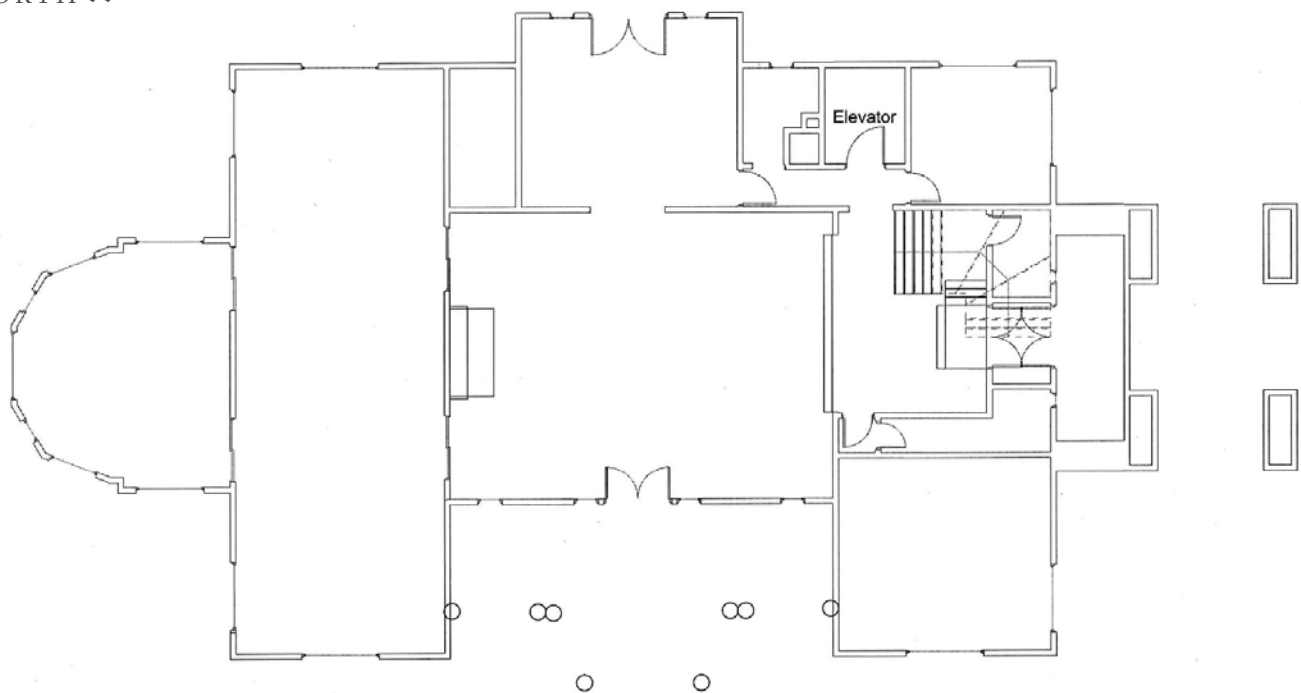
## APPENDIX

### Villa Lewaro/Madam C.J. Walker House

#### 2013 Floor Plan: 1st Story

*Not to Scale*

NORTH >>

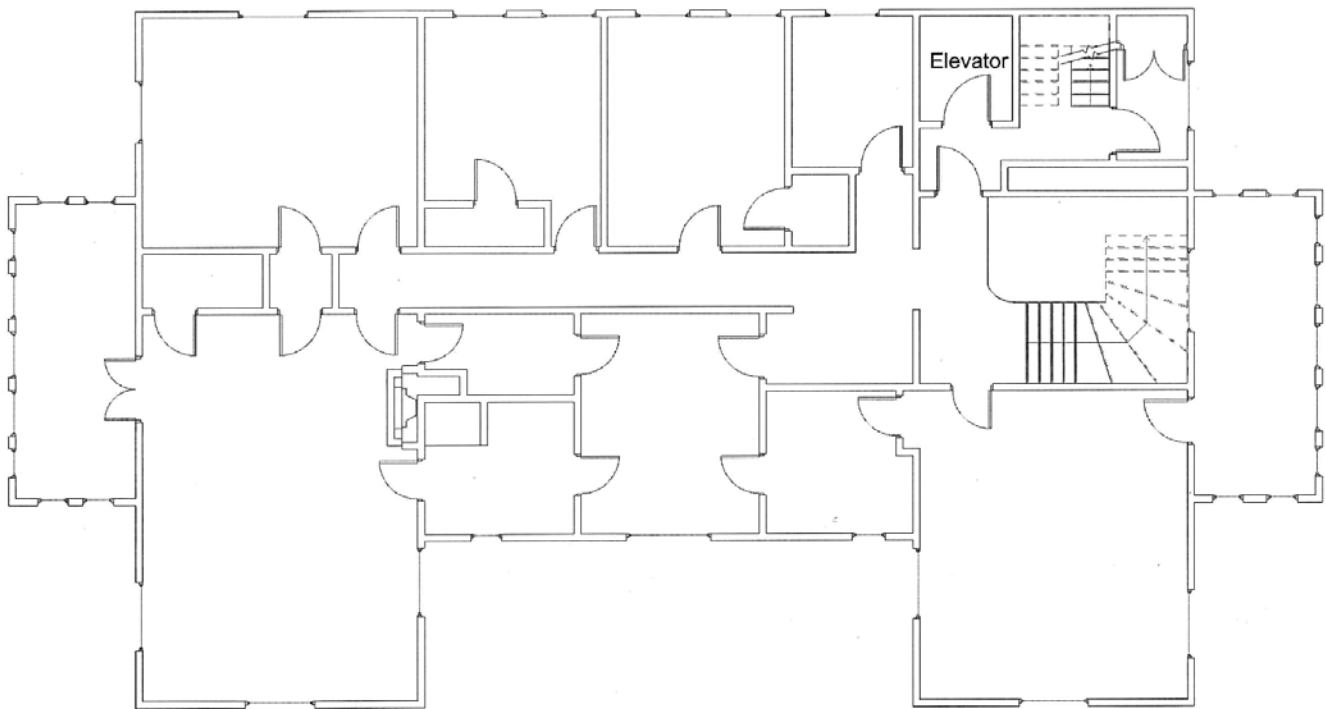


**Villa Lewaro/Madam C.J. Walker House**

**2013 Floor Plan: 2nd Story**

*Not to Scale*

NORTH >>



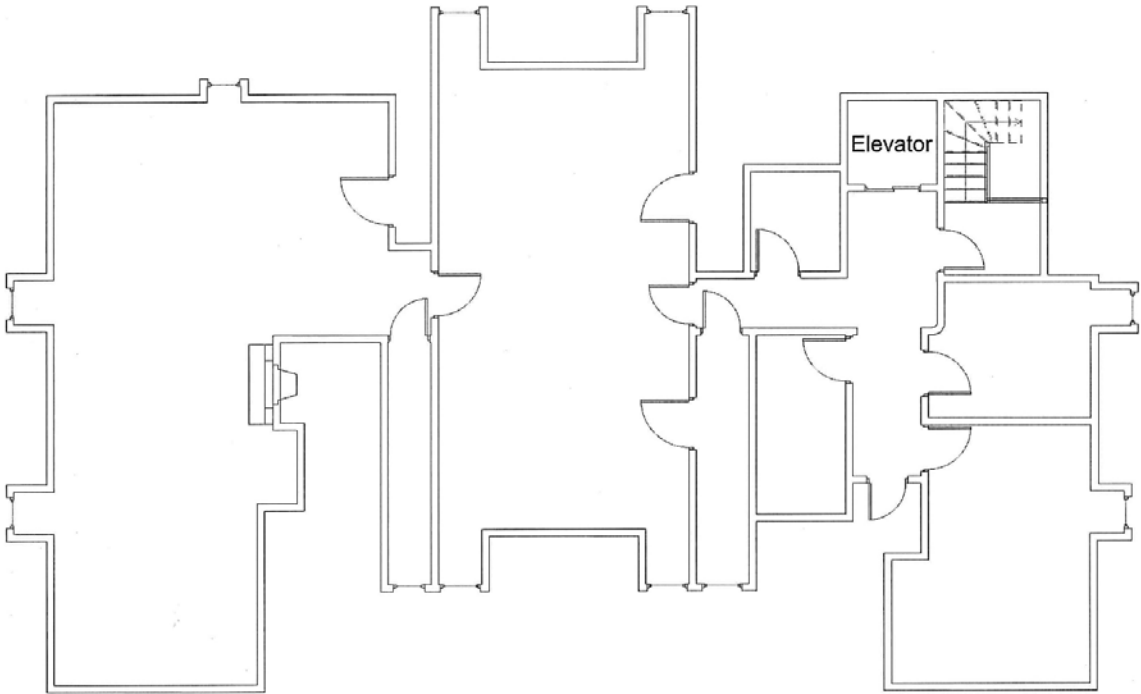


Villa Lewaro/Madam C.J. Walker House

2013 Floor Plan: 3rd Story

*Not to Scale*

NORTH >>





A'Lelia Walker, who had been intimately involved in working with architect Vertner Tandy, as well as the contractors (Miller and Reed) and the decorators (Frank Smith), enjoyed hosting both lavish events and intimates soirees in the home after her mother's death. Dubbed "the joy goddess of Harlem's 1920s" by her friend Langston Hughes because of her knack for parties, she always featured live music, delicious food, extravagant floral arrangements, and interesting guests. Her friend Geraldyn Dismond, society columnist for the *Baltimore Afro-America*, described a 1930 open house in this way: "Very gay and marvelously smart. After all, there is no place like Villa Lewaro."

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"As is the case with all materials resulting from meetings held at The Pocantico Center, the views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, its trustees, or its staff."

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