



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
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News Release

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Statement from the National Trust for Historic Preservation Regarding its Decision to Join the City of Berkeley's Lawsuit Against the US Postal Service

Washington (November 24, 2014) –The following is a statement by Paul W. Edmondson, general counsel and chief legal officer of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, regarding the National Trust's decision to join the City of Berkeley in a lawsuit against the United States Postal Service for failing to comply with federal historic preservation laws prior to entering into a contract for sale of the Berkeley Main Post Office building.

“Over the past several months, the City of Berkeley and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have been engaged in good-faith negotiations with the United States Postal Service, seeking a long-term preservation covenant for the Berkeley Main Post Office building to fulfill the agency's obligations under federal preservation law. In October, however, the Postal Service abruptly ended the negotiations, closing off what had been a productive process and leaving the building's potential sale shrouded in secrecy.

“We would have preferred to resolve this matter through continued negotiations, but the Postal Service's unwillingness to communicate its plans for the building left us no choice but to join the City of Berkeley's lawsuit.

“The National Trust is concerned not only with this particular historic building, but more broadly with historic post office buildings in communities throughout the nation that are being disposed of by the Postal Service without adequate measures to ensure their long-term preservation. Despite repeated requests from elected officials, preservation groups, and local citizens, the Postal Service has not come forth with a clear and consistent process for protecting these important community assets. We hope that this litigation will cause the Postal Service to rethink its entire approach to transferring ownership of its stock of historic post office buildings.”

Additional Background: Completed in 1914, the Berkeley Main Post Office is a valued community asset in the civic core of downtown and has been an integral part of the federal government's presence in Berkeley for 100 years. It was listed as a Berkeley City Landmark in 1980 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places individually in 1981 and as a contributing structure to the Berkeley Civic Center Historic District in 1998. The City filed its case against the Postal Service on November 4. The following day U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup issued a temporary restraining order, preventing the Postal Service from taking action to sell the historic building to a third party pending the government's response. A hearing is scheduled for December 11.

The National Trust has focused on protecting historic post offices for many years because we understand that post offices occupy special places at the heart of thousands of American communities, and the Postal Service itself has noted that ‘people have long viewed their post office as much more than a place to send and receive mail.’ The Trust named Historic Post Offices to our list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2012, and also named post office buildings to our portfolio of National Treasures.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America’s historic places. www.PreservationNation.org