

# Richardson Olmsted Campus

## BUFFALO, NEW YORK

THE RICHARDSON OLMSTED CAMPUS, a 145-year-old National Historic Landmark, is one of the most important architectural achievements in Buffalo. Strong community efforts to revive this once-abandoned and deteriorated architectural jewel have saved it from demolition.



**BEFORE** Originally built in 1872 as the Buffalo State Asylum, the impressive campus contains 13 buildings across 42 acres of grounds. It was designed by Henry Hobson Richardson alongside the landscape team of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. At the time, the asylum was known for combining the most advanced principles in psychiatric treatment with state-of-the-art technology. However, as mental health treatment evolved, the building and grounds were reduced in size, and half of the campus was developed into Buffalo State College in 1927. Patients were eventually moved to a new facility, and the campus was abandoned by the 1970s.

**TRANSFORMED** With encouragement from the state, the Richardson Center Corporation was created to put forth a plan for reviving this architectural masterpiece. State and federal historic tax credits combined with private philanthropy helped fund this ambitious project. The first phase of redevelopment is now complete and includes a hotel, a restaurant, and an architecture center.



**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation®**

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PHOTOS BY SCOTT GABLE PHOTOGRAPHY

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**RICHARDSON OLMSTED CAMPUS WINS NATIONAL PRESERVATION AWARD**



*Buffalo's architectural jewel and former asylum receives the  
Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Award,  
the nation's highest honor in preservation*

**WASHINGTON (October 15, 2018)**—Today, highlighting one of the largest and most imaginative preservation projects in the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced the 145-year-old **Richardson Olmsted Campus** in Buffalo, New York as one of only three winners of the **2018 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards**. Given each year at the end of a juried competition, the Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards, the nation's most coveted and prestigious, are bestowed on historic preservation efforts that demonstrate excellence in execution and a positive impact on the vitality of their towns and cities.

“Through creative and meticulous restorations that reinvigorate older buildings, elevate the quality of public life, and educate and encourage others, the winning projects are outstanding examples of the power and potential of preservation to improve lives,” said Stephanie Meeks, president and CEO of the National Trust. “We are honored to partner with the Driehaus Foundation to celebrate the Richardson Olmsted Campus as one of this year's awardees—remarkable not just for its size and beauty, but for the many ways it puts community first.”

“As stewards of one of the most important architectural achievements in Buffalo, we are honored to receive this recognition from the National Trust,” said Paul Hojnacki, president of the Richardson Center Corporation. “We look forward to seeing the story of the Richardson Olmsted Campus’s transformation and contribution to the city’s resurgence as an art and culture destination continue to be a source of inspiration for the region—and for the creative potential of adaptive reuse projects across the country.”

Originally built in 1872 as the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane, the impressive campus contains 13 buildings across 42 acres of grounds. It was designed by Henry Hobson Richardson alongside the landscape team of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. At the time, the asylum was known for combining the most advanced principles in psychiatric treatment with state-of-the-art technology. However, as mental health treatment evolved, the building and grounds were reduced in size, and land was transferred to create Buffalo State College in 1927. Patients were eventually moved to a new facility, and the campus was abandoned by the 1970s.

With funding and encouragement from the State of New York, the Richardson Center Corporation was created to put forth a plan for reviving this architectural masterpiece. State and federal historic tax credits via M&T Bank combined with private philanthropy helped fund this ambitious project. Playing an integral role in the renewal of the city and the entire Buffalo-Niagara region, the first phase of redevelopment is now complete and includes a hotel, a restaurant, and an architecture center—creating nearly 600 jobs and generating new sales tax revenues.

“We are thrilled that the Richardson Center Corporation will be receiving this well-deserved, highly prestigious award. It seems hard to believe now, but there was a time when there were calls to demolish the “eyesore” that this amazing building had become—mobilizing preservationists to fight hard to ensure that not only would the building be preserved, but that it would be put back into use for the community’s benefit,” said Jessie Fisher, executive director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara. “Thanks to the hard work of the Richardson Corporation and its people-centered, transparent redevelopment process, this building has become an asset to its neighborhood and the entire region and showcases the value and power of preservation.”

Established in 2012, the Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards have honored distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and corporations whose skill and determination have added to the richness of their communities by preserving their architectural and cultural heritage. As the most sought after of all National Trust awards, the

initiative recognizes efforts in landmark preservation, historic restoration, skilled craftsmanship, and educational and advocacy activities.

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards winners, chosen from among 50 nominated projects by a jury led by Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic Paul Goldberger, will be honored as part of [PastForward 2018](#), the nation's largest historic preservation conference, on November 14 at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre in San Francisco. This year's other awardees are The Douglass at Page Woodson apartment community in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and the Crosstown Concourse mixed-used facility in Memphis, Tennessee.

Members of the public are invited to learn more about the award-winning set of projects, individuals, and organizations that have demonstrated excellence in the field of preservation at: [www.SavingPlaces.org/awards](http://www.SavingPlaces.org/awards)

**Images at top:** Richardson Olmsted Campus in Buffalo, New York. Photos: Scott Gable Photography.

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#### **About the National Trust for Historic Preservation**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic places. [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)

#### **About the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards**

The Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards have honored distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and corporations whose skill and determination have given new meaning to communities by preserving their architectural and cultural heritage. The coveted awards recognize efforts such as citizens saving and maintaining important landmarks, companies and craftsmen restoring the richness of the past, public officials supporting preservation projects and legislation in their communities, and educators and journalists helping Americans understand the value of preservation. [www.savingplaces.org/awards](http://www.savingplaces.org/awards)