

## **A Q&A about the Randolph-Lucas House with Erica Danylchak**

*Executive Director of the Buckhead Heritage Society*

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### **Where is the Randolph-Lucas House moving?**

If everything goes according to plan, it will move to 78 Peachtree Circle, in historic Ansley Park.

### **Will there be a press conference in the near future?**

Buckhead Heritage anticipates holding a press conference within the next 60 days to release additional project details.

### **Why is the Randolph-Lucas House so historically significant that it deserves this much attention?**

The Randolph-Lucas house is unquestionably a historically significant building in the City of Atlanta. It was designated a Historic Building – Exterior by the City of Atlanta in 1990 for its historic, cultural, and architectural significance.

The house was built in 1924 for Hollins Nicholas Randolph, a great, great grandson of Thomas Jefferson and a prominent Atlanta attorney in the early 20th century. P. Thornton Marye, a respected Atlanta architect in the early twentieth century, designed the house based on Randolph's ancestral home "Dunlora" in Albemarle County, Virginia, where Randolph was born in 1872. Marye had moved to Atlanta in 1904 after being awarded the contract for Atlanta's Terminal Station. He is also credited with the designs for St. Luke's Episcopal Church (1906) and the Fox Theatre (1929) in Atlanta and other large-scale commissions throughout the southeast. The Randolph-Lucas house, however, is one of the few known extant examples of his residential work. The Randolph-Lucas House is also a rare surviving example of the grand residential mansions that lined Peachtree Road during the early twentieth century in Atlanta.

### **Is it true that the house has been moved once before?**

In 1998, the house was moved 35 feet forward and 30 feet to the south on its current lot by developer Blaine Kelley, Jr., to make room for the 2500 Peachtree Condominium building behind it.

### **Has the house been in use or vacant for the past few years?**

Mrs. Margaret C. Lucas purchased the property in 1935 and lived in the house until her death in 1987. This was the last time the house was used as a residence. After 1987, the house was used as a special events rental facility until Blaine Kelley, Jr. purchased the property in 1997.

### **What will the house be used for in the new location?**

The house will return to its original use as a private residence. But it will be subject to a historic façade easement that will prevent future demolition.

**What date do you anticipate the house to be moved?**

A specific date has not been set for the move, but it is anticipated that the house will be relocated during the summer of 2013.

**Will Peachtree Road be closed during the move?**

There will be rolling closures of Peachtree Road as utility lines are moved. A traffic plan will be developed and submitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to the move that will ensure the least inconvenience to motorists.

**Did the offer to move this house attract offers from around the country?**

Although most of the people interested in relocating the house were from the metro Atlanta area, Buckhead Heritage did receive inquiries from Louisiana and North Carolina. In December 2012, the organization disseminated an RFP for the relocation of the house to assess which interested party had the best plan, including the financial resources to complete the project and a location where the house would be compatible architecturally within its new surroundings. Christopher Jones and Roger Smith, founders of New Town Partners, submitted a realistic plan that would maintain the architectural integrity of the house and they were ultimately chosen as the project partners.

**Will something else need to be torn down to accommodate the House?**

No.

**Is the Randolph-Lucas House's new location occupied, or is it vacant?**

78 Peachtree Circle is a vacant lot. However, a single-family residence previously stood on the lot, so sewer and water lines are already present.

**Tell us a little about the efforts on behalf of the Buckhead Heritage Society in bringing partners to the table to make this happen.**

Buckhead Heritage has reached out to key partners to provide expertise and services throughout this project. At a July 2012 meeting (details below), gathered parties decided to work together to determine how to relocate the house, but agreed that it could not be an indefinite project. An agreement was needed that would create a framework for the relocation of the house and outline a reasonable amount of time for the interested parties to devise a relocation plan after a demolition permit for the building was issued.

Buckhead Heritage subsequently worked closely with the City of Atlanta Law Department and legal counsel for the 2500 Condominium Association to draft a formal agreement that allowed Buckhead Heritage to access the house to make inspections and show the house to parties interested in relocating it. Buckhead Heritage called on the Southeast Chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art to help document the house and produce architectural renderings. Buckhead Heritage also reached out to Revival Construction to do an assessment of the house's rehabilitation needs and associated costs. Wright Marshall, president of Revival, did a rehabilitation assessment on a *pro bono* basis. Buckhead Heritage asked the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation to hold a preservation façade easement on the house once it was relocated to ensure that it

would be preserved in perpetuity. The Georgia Trust has agreed to hold the easement and will waive its typical administrative fee for the donation. Buckhead Heritage has called upon both the Georgia Trust and the Atlanta Preservation Center for technical assistance throughout the process. After Christopher Jones and Roger Smith joined the project as the future owners of the house, they reached out to additional project partners including One Museum Square and Georgia Commerce Bank.

**Has the 2500 Peachtree Road Condominium Association been supportive of the preservation effort?**

Yes. The Condominium Association signed an agreement with Buckhead Heritage and the City of Atlanta in October 2012 that allowed Buckhead Heritage to access the house to determine the method and cost of relocating the house and allowed those interested in relocating the house to inspect it. Since Christopher Jones and Roger Smith were chosen to relocate the house, the condominium association has participated in numerous planning meetings regarding the complex logistics of the project. In February, the condominium association signed an addendum to the original agreement allowing the project partners additional time to coordinate project details and permitting.

**What are the plans for the property once the house is moved?**

The new owners will sensitively rehabilitate the home according to historic preservation standards. The new owners will also donate a preservation façade easement to the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, ensuring that the house can never be torn down and that all future exterior changes or additions follow preservation standards.

**Do the future owners have experience moving houses such as this?**

In the early 1980s Christopher Jones, one of the future owners of the Randolph-Lucas House, purchased a historic home threatened with demolition and had it moved to a new location to serve as his primary residence.

**Tell me a little more about the journey the house will take, what is the specific route the house will travel?**

The building will be jacked up and steel beams will be inserted underneath the house at its current location at 2500 Peachtree Road (at the intersection of Lindbergh Drive). A rig will pull the building off the lot directly onto Peachtree Road. Then the house will be pulled south along Peachtree Road/Street to 1301 Peachtree Street, the large vacant lot across from the High Museum. One Museum Square, which owns the lot at 1301 Peachtree Street, has agreed to allow a temporary road to be built across its lot to the 78 Peachtree Circle lot, which sits directly behind it. The house will be pulled across the temporary road and into place at its new home.

**Has the new location been purchased by the new owners?**

Yes.

**Will overpasses and bridges need to be secured to protect them from damage?**

No. Once the house is jacked up at the 2500 Peachtree Road site, it will be weighed. The rig that transports the house will be configured so that the load of the house is spread out to meet the normal-load-per-axle requirement for those bridges to ensure safe passage.

**What is the history of the house?**

The house was built in 1924 for Hollins Nicholas Randolph, a great, great grandson of Thomas Jefferson and a prominent Atlanta attorney in the early 20th century. Randolph followed the trend of other affluent citizens in Atlanta who moved north of the city along Peachtree Road as the automobile became increasingly popular. P. Thornton Marye, who was a prominent Atlanta architect, designed the house based on Randolph's ancestral home "Dunlora" in Albemarle County, Virginia, where Randolph was born in 1872.

Randolph lived in the house for 10 years. Margaret Lucas then purchased the property in 1935 and lived in the home until her death in 1987. She was the last occupant. Her husband, Arthur Lucas, owned several theaters in Atlanta, including the Tenth Street Theater and the West End Theater.

The house was designated a Historic Building – Exterior by the City of Atlanta in 1990 for its historic, cultural, and architectural significance.

Developer Blaine Kelly's The Urban Group (TUG) later purchased the home and associated parcel. In 1997, interested parties, including The Atlanta Preservation Center and The Peachtree Heights West Civic Association, agreed to support the increased density in zoning TUG sought to construct the present high-rise condominiums as long as the house was maintained on the site. At the end of 1998, the house was moved 35 feet forward and 30 feet to the south to make room for the condominium building behind it. Unfortunately, other conditions concerning the preservation of the House that were agreed upon by TUG and Peachtree Heights West were not made part of the rezoning legislation.

The House was used as a sales office by TUG, which declared bankruptcy in 2001, and subsequent developers managed the condominium until it was turned over to the current condo association in late 2003.

**How and when did the Buckhead Heritage Society get involved?**

Buckhead Heritage became involved in June 2012, after learning that the 2500 Peachtree Condominium Association had applied for a demolition permit for the building. Buckhead Heritage worked to raise awareness of the significance of the building and voiced strong opposition to the demolition of the building before the NPU-B Zoning Committee. During that meeting, Buckhead Heritage President Wright Mitchell supported relocating the building as an alternative to demolition. Buckhead Heritage subsequently worked with the 2500 Peachtree Condominium Association and the City of Atlanta to create a legal framework that would allow for the house's relocation.

**How has this process been a good example of how stakeholders can come together for preservation and/or for the greater good of civic causes?**

The Randolph-Lucas House relocation project is a complex one that has required the expertise, cooperation, and creativity of numerous stakeholders in the community to make it happen. On July 3, 2012, Buckhead Heritage organized a meeting to discuss the feasibility of relocating the house as an alternative to demolition. The group decided that it should use its “collective wisdom” to pursue the solution of relocating the house within a specified timeframe. Relocating a 2½-story historic house in a dense, urban environment takes intensive planning and creative solutions to seemingly insurmountable challenges. Throughout the process, however, invested stakeholders have provided ideas for overcoming obstacles or contacts that have been able to provide needed expertise. A group of diverse, passionate stakeholders can effectively advance even the most complex preservation projects.

**Please share with us some greater detail about the reasons the house is being moved and what has happened in the past year.**

In the spring of 2012, the 2500 Peachtree Condominium Association requested an inspection of the Randolph-Lucas House by Ray Engineering. The house was deemed to be structurally unsafe, and the association filed an application with the Office of Buildings of the City of Atlanta for a building permit requesting permission to demolish the house as a threat to public health and safety.

The City of Atlanta subsequently delivered a letter to the association, rejecting the conclusion of the association’s engineer that the house is a threat to public health and safety, denying the application, and directing the association to apply for a demolition permit under Section 16-20.007(c) of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances, the code section related to the demolition or moving of historic buildings or sites. This process required, among other things, a 45-day review and comment period by the AUDC and the submission of plans for a replacement structure. At the time, the City of Atlanta and Buckhead Heritage concluded that the association would satisfy the requirements of the relevant code section and a demolition permit would be issued.

In July 2012, interested parties and entities concluded that the only feasible solution to preserve the Randolph-Lucas House was to relocate it from its present location. A long history of events led to this conclusion. (For more information regarding the events that led to this move, please see below.)

The house was last used as a residence in 1987 when its final inhabitant, Mrs. Margaret Lucas, died. The Atlanta Urban Design Commission (AUDC) nominated the house as a Historic Building pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Atlanta. The house was originally nominated as a Landmark Building, but the AUDC subsequently changed the nomination to a Historic Building – Exterior. This designation, approved by the City Council and the Mayor of Atlanta in 1990, affords the structure less protection than a Landmark designation.

Following Mrs. Lucas' death, the property, including the Randolph-Lucas House, was sold to Atlanta developer Blaine Kelly's The Urban Group. In 1997, The Atlanta Preservation Center, The Peachtree Heights West Civic Association, and other interested parties agreed to support the increased density in zoning The Urban Group sought to construct the present high-rise condominium building as long as the house was maintained on the site. Additional conditions concerning the preservation of the house were not made part of the rezoning legislation.

In 1998, the house was moved to its current location on the site and a 30-day Temporary Certificate of Occupancy as a business was issued, but no subsequent Permanent Certificate of Occupancy was ever issued. The house was used as a sales office by The Urban Group, which soon declared bankruptcy. Subsequent developers maintained the building until it was turned over to the association in late 2003. The house was defined as a Common Element in the Declaration of Condominium to be used solely by the association for meeting space. In 2005, the association discovered there was no Permanent Certificate of Occupancy ever issued by the City of Atlanta for the house, but that there had been a certificate of occupancy allowing the other buildings on the premises to be used as permitted or anticipated by the terms of the rezoning. Upon this discovery, the association was advised by legal counsel that it was prohibited from using the house for any purpose. The house has not been used since. In January of 2006, the Association applied for a rezoning of the property. After receiving a recommendation of denial from the AUDC, the rezoning application was tabled before being voted upon by the City Council.

Since then, the association has pursued many avenues to use, sell, or donate the house. The lack of parking for the building and other issues related to the zoning significantly limit potential uses. Issues related to the transfer of title, lease terms, rezoning or other business considerations presented significant difficulties for the association in seeking other uses of the house.

On July 3, 2012 the following interested parties met to discuss the future of the house: Boyd Coons, president, Atlanta Preservation Center; Wright Mitchell, president, Buckhead Heritage Society; Erica Danylchak, executive director, Buckhead Heritage Society; Hakim Hilliard, attorney for the condo association; Lemuel Ward, chief counsel, City of Atlanta; Sally Silver, chairperson, NPU-B; Bill Murray, chairperson, NPU-B Zoning Committee; Buff Quillian, president, Peachtree Heights West Civic Association; Jack Weeks, structural engineer, G&W Services, Inc.; Tom Little, architect, Surber, Barber, Choate & Hertlein. The parties concluded that relocating the house was the only feasible solution for preserving it.

On October 22, 2012, Buckhead Heritage, the City of Atlanta, through the Atlanta Urban Design Commission, and the Office of Buildings, and the 2500 Peachtree Road Condominium Association entered into an agreement that created a framework for the relocation of the Randolph-Lucas House. The agreement was the product of months of hard work and negotiations between the City of Atlanta Law Department, attorneys at

McKenna, Long & Aldridge, LLP, who represented the condo association and attorneys at Constangy, Brooks & Smith, LLP, who represent Buckhead Heritage.

**Will more details be forthcoming in the next weeks?**

Yes. After the permitting processes with the City of Atlanta and Georgia Department of Transportation are complete in the coming weeks, additional details will be available and made public.

**Why must work start now when all of the necessary permits and approvals for the relocation have not been obtained?**

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Pursuant to the Agreement, the 2500 Peachtree Road Condo Association agreed to a 120 day “stand still” period after the issuance of the demolition permit during which time there would be no efforts to demolish the house. The original Agreement between the parties was scheduled to expire on March 6, 2013 and, therefore, the parties executed an Addendum to the original Agreement that extended the “stand still” period an additional forty five (45) days up through and including April 21, 2013. Since that second deadline has now passed, the Condo Association could technically act to demolish the house at any time. In light of the fact that a relocation appears imminent, however, the Condo Association has declined to act on the demolition permit and is instead working actively to help move the house.

Unfortunately, the demolition permit that was issued by the City of Atlanta has a life of only sixty (60) days (City of Atlanta Code Section 104.5) from the expiration of the deadline established by the Addendum. Therefore, the demolition permit will expire on June 21, 2013 if work to demolish or relocate the house is not commenced by that date. As such, time is of the essence and work must start now.

In addition to the foregoing legal deadline, the Georgia Department of Transportation permitting process cannot be commenced until the house is jacked up off its foundation and weighed. This is yet another reason work must commence now.