

TERRI GUEN TRANSCRIPT

TERRI: We were talking about strategies and how to elevate this wonderful site which we have no identified as the Summit Tunnel. And there are some issues that people have talked about already, one of which is it's too vast. It, as Phil noted, it's miles, you know, of activity along the Transcontinental Railroad route.

Some of the railroad is active and some of it has no rails on it, which makes it a little more open to being used for pedestrians and bikers [unintelligible] there's no chance of getting run over by a railroad. I was also on the tour and Phil [unintelligible] noted to us, the had gone[?] away. So, if you, let's say, were taking a photograph and you're on your mountain bike, you have an accident happen, that would be really unfortunate, but that is, they cannot stop a train.

[unintelligible] next to you, so we're really focused on the areas probably that are not on an active rail. We might even have someone from the railroad joining us, is he here today? We haven't seen him yet, but we're hoping that he may be with us.

So, there are many attributes of the site that we've already identified and later on in the session, in the afternoon, I'm going to stand up again and we're going to focus on, based on the whole discussion, what you all are thinking, what would your preference be in terms of maybe we should do this as a site or that could be a site but this session is used to talk about strategy. So, we're going to talk about one experience that I had with the National Register of Historic Places. We have Barbara Wyatt from the National Park Service next to me and she's going to co-discuss this or present it with me because she's also going to talk about the national monuments. She is the authority on this, I'm just kind of giving you kind of maybe the person, like yourselves, who may be new to how the process, how this works.

So, I'm going to focus on the National Register, a conference that was hosted in August 2018 in Boston, and from Boston's Chinatown. My family is from Chinatown and the Chinese have been there for 140 years. I brought the Advisory Council there for a East Coast listening session and they said "No, no we're having it in Angel Island in San Francisco". I said well there's real deep Chinese history, it's just that in Boston you're not going to find anyone who raises their hand necessarily. Because, they're really quiet about it and they kind of don't want to get involved. And they're thinking all over the country, we have small towns in America where we're trying to get National Register properties listed.

We've been trying for decades, we don't qualify, and here you have an entirely historical community that doesn't seem to care.

So, it's not that the Asians[?] didn't seem to care, I think there was, you know, Federal Highway came in and kind of drove over half of Chinatown. There was a lot of animosity actually, and so people were like [unintelligible] wanting programs.

So, we're getting the community back into the discussion about the, you are so historical, and wouldn't you consider it your work to be part of the story? They didn't- no one raised their hand, they were like "so what are you talking about, what is this about"?

I think that kind of a scenario is not unlike the association many Asian Americans have with their own history, particularly with the railroad. Because, you know, having worked as a laborer on a railroad was not so cool as like the other guy whose, you know, ancestor went to school and was a scholar or became rich. And so, some of this history went by the wayside and now we're trying to recover it and, you know, a lot of these people don't remember it. [unintelligible] the railroad workers here, just saying this is sort of where we're at with a lot of people. Now we're thinking "hey, we'd like to get involved, how do we get involved"?

So, I'm just going to quickly talk about the National Register, I think Barbara is going to talk about the landmark program at the question and answer period. And so, what we did in Boston is we actually received a \$2,000 underrepresented grant from National Park Service. We went to Massachusetts [unintelligible] students or preservation officer, they utilized the grant to hire a consultant to create the contact[?] study of the official history of the Chinese immigration to Boston.

And this was never written officially, they have the historical society that had a lot of writings but nothing that was, kind of, the official US version of the history. When the property gets put on the National Register, that version of the history actually gets put in the Library of Congress. So, when you're thinking about, you know, 140 years of people who just kind of lived there and, all of a sudden, you kind of find you're significant and your history is actually put officially in the Library of Congress.

That seemed to be the hook that people are very interested in and, subsequently, you know, there is a [unintelligible] in the building, it was given to the community as a [unintelligible] center. It was the first Horace Mann[?] school that had divided[?] classrooms, so the building itself had some significance and, mind you, I am speaking about the building versus a whole landscape. But the outcome was that after being placed on the Register, this building in Chinatown, all of a sudden, qualified for all of these preservation grants.

There is a new tax in the city of Boston for open space [unintelligible] preservation and affordable housing. And, all of a sudden, they qualified, and this is not a promise, but we said to the people you qualified for grants. And, at this point, they now received about 480 million dollars worth of grants in about a year and a half, which, before, they could not even apply for because they did not have a National Register site.

So, it's not just about money, but I think the community is starting to realize "wait a minute, if all of the outsiders are paying attention to this space and our history, maybe we should pay more attention to it as well".

So, I'm going to pass the mic on, my time is up here, and but just to get you a little bit excited, that the National Register is not intended to be a barrier, it actually can be a doorway into elevating histories for people who are [unintelligible].