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Editorial – May 4, 2008

A partnership to protect history begins to blossom

Petersburg has moved to protect historic Battersea.

Recently, the Petersburg City Council unanimously approved granted the historic house and grounds a perpetual historic easement to the state to protect and preserve Battersea.

The council action is the latest demonstration of the ongoing partnership between the city of Petersburg and a private entity to work together.

Last year, city officials and members of the nonprofit group Battersea Inc. announced a unique partnership to revitalize the property and open it to the community. The city, which purchased the property for \$200,000 in 1985 as a capital endeavor, still owns the property. But Battersea Inc. will take a leadership role in fund raising and preserving the structure.

Since the partnership was formed last year, the city and Battersea Inc. entered into a memorandum of agreement formalizing the partnership. Also, Battersea believed an easement will enhance the group's ability to raise money and bring in donations.

For example, the easement will allow the city and the group to receive grant funds from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Supporters of Battersea flocked to a recently City Council meeting asking for the easement. And they got it.

It was a win-win situation.

“It's not just about what the city can do for the house, but what the house can do for the city, and the house can do a lot,” said Barbara Moseley, a Battersea leader.

Battersea, located at 793 Appomattox St., has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1968. The five-section Battersea home was built in 1768 by John Banister, a distinguished figure from the Revolutionary era, a merchant and the first mayor of Petersburg.

Kathleen Kilpatrick, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, said that Battersea is “essential to understanding American history.”

With the partnership and easement firmly in place, Battersea supporters will be able to focus on the future of the historic house and the 37-acre property.

We believe strongly that the Battersea property will become a key ingredient in the area's effort to attract historical tourism. In that regard, the community can be pleased with what is happening at Battersea.

But an even more important development is occurring that bodes well for the future of Petersburg. A blossoming of a private-public partnership to move forward a specific project. The use of private-public partnerships can be an increasingly important tool in revitalizing Petersburg.