Holiday Greetings!

We hope you enjoy the photos (last page) taken at our November 13th Open House celebrating our new Hartford office location. As I noted at that event, all I can say is, “We’ve come a long way, baby,” since I started FHI in my Hartford home almost 28 years ago.

The new space is perfect for FHI and beautifully reflects our culture and values: we are in a highly urban location, accessible by many modes (fitting for a transportation planning firm); in a LEED-certified building (ideal for an environmental planning firm); in an historic building which has been lovingly preserved and renovated (ideal for a cultural resource planning firm) and is filled with open and flexible meeting spaces (perfect for a firm based on a collaborative working model). As Susan said at our Open House, many were involved in finding and preparing our new space. My hat is off to everyone, both within FHI and outside, who made it all come together so well.

The technology that helps us do what we do continues to amaze me. When I started FHI we didn’t even have a fax machine...a technology which has now pretty much come and gone! I had a little computer with no hard drive, a dot matrix printer and, of course, this was pre-internet. That little laptop, of course, had just a tiny fraction of the computing power that my smart phone has today. Even doing a conference call was quite a production at that time, while now we successfully employ videoconferencing and filesharing with ease, not to mention advances in mapping and so many other technical areas.

There is no doubt that how we go about our business has changed much over the years. But what hasn’t changed is our commitment to YOU, our clients and friends, without whom there would be no US.

From our “house” to yours, we wish you the happiest of holiday seasons and a peaceful and profitable 2015!

From the Founder
A Few Reflections

Photo by: Vivienne Guoia

Winter scene from outside FHI’s New York City office.
Picture this: the sparkling, blue waters of the Delaware Bay. A quaint, coastal village complete with “painted lady” Victorian homes, historic buildings and museums, and white, sandy beaches. Sweeping, picturesque views of the shoreline, lighthouses, fishing boats, and in the distance, acres of farmland. Seems like a pretty amazing place, doesn’t it? Well, that’s Lewes, Delaware – the first town in the first state. But due to growth and development pressures, Lewes is fighting to keep its history and beauty intact.

Lewes (pronounced loo-is, a crucial point with locals) has a very rich maritime and agricultural history dating back to its founding as a Dutch colony in 1631. Nowadays, its claim-to-fame is as a weekend summer getaway community for thousands of people from northern Delaware, Pennsylvania, Northern Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland and New Jersey.

Sounds perfect, right? Not quite... New multi-family and single-family housing developments are being constructed at a very rapid pace. Zoning modifications are changing the character of the community. Weekend traffic makes it difficult to maneuver around town. Incomplete bicycle paths force families to ride on the narrow and historic roadways creating safety issues for both motorists and bicyclists. Many of the nearly 3,000 year-round residents are starting to question what can be done to preserve Lewes’ beloved character.

That’s where Delaware Greenways, Inc. comes in. Working with the City of Lewes and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Delaware Greenways established a scenic and historic byway through the City of Lewes. In 2008, a network of key roadways, many of which serve as gateways from land and sea, were successfully nominated as a Delaware Scenic and Historic Highway, based on their significant scenic, historic, natural, and recreational qualities.

To advance the process, FHI is working with Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects to assist Delaware Greenways with the development of a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) to help preserve and enhance the significant natural and historic resources along the byway. When complete, the CMP will outline specific strategies for resource preservation, heritage- and nature-based tourism, and enhancement of the travel experience (e.g. context-sensitive strategies to address traffic congestion, parking, walkability and bikeability).

Nearly 80 residents turned out for the first CMP public meeting where FHI facilitated a very lively discussion on byway planning. Over the coming months the project team will incorporate all of the feedback received. Another public meeting will be held this spring to present recommendations.

The residents of Lewes are concerned about the changes occurring in their community, and are very supportive of these efforts to help keep Lewes the special place it is today. For more information, contact: Kristen Ahlfeld, kahlfeld@fhiplan.com.
FHI Hits the Ground Running on High Priority Project

Twice this summer, the Walk Bridge, a 118-year old railroad swing bridge over the Norwalk River, over-rotated while closing, failing to properly reseat four sets of tracks. The result? Two lengthy six-hour delays for Metro North commuters as well as a train scheduling nightmare along the Northeast Corridor. A team of planners and engineers led by HNTB have been mobilized by CTDOT to complete design and permitting for an estimated $465 million bridge replacement by 2016, commence construction in 2017 and open the bridge for service in 2020. In the meantime, to avoid encountering future service delays, Metro-North is employing extraordinary manual measures to ensure that the bridge opens, closes and locks back into its proper position. FHI is a key part of the team mobilized for this high priority, fast track project. Ultimately responsible for close coordination with designers to ensure a successful permitting process, we needed to move quickly on early environmental studies. Within a few short days, and to the delight of our client, we rallied all three of our Connecticut Certified Soils Scientists (CSS) and two supporting biologists, traveled to the site for Metro North safety training, attended a project kick-off briefing, and delineated inland and tidal wetlands all in the same day! Important wetland resource mapping will soon be available to project designers. There is no time to catch our breath on this project as we have already initiated agency coordination and planning for a benthic invertebrate study. Ready-set-go? Forget about ready and set, it’s go-go-go on this project! For more information, contact: Paul Stanton, pstanton@fhiplan.com.

When the 118-year-old Walk Bridge is out of alignment it creates havoc for train travel in the corridor. MetroNorth is manually ensuring that the bridge can remain open while a new bridge is planned, designed and constructed.

Ron Gautreau and David Laïappa (Paul Stanton and Anthony Zemba not pictured) delineate tidal wetlands along the Norwalk River.

Achieving Resiliency With Strong Community Input

Fast track studies with intense public involvement? Some might consider that a contradiction in terms, but FHI is helping to prove that it can be done. Since 2013, FHI has been helping New York communities devise plans that will help make their homes, businesses, parks, and thoroughfares more resilient and better able to accommodate emergency situations like Superstorm Sandy. Federal funding for capital improvements will be available to communities that quickly complete a plan.

Working in New York City (covering all of Staten Island and a major swath of Southeast Queens) as well as the “Five Towns” area of southwestern Nassau County on Long Island, FHI facilitated outreach activities that will ultimately lead to an investment of nearly $60 million in these areas. Each community effort is led by local stakeholders who meet several times with the study team. The public offers their input at interactive workshops four times during each study. Ryan, Melissa, and Arnie have supported these efforts, described by one Community Committee Co-Chairperson as a process where “we did it more with our ears...We listened to our neighbors and mayors. We spent a lot of time gathering information, and with that, we came up with our plan.”

For more information, contact: Melissa Pineda, mpineda@fhiplan.com.

Drainage Improvements at this park is one measure considered by New York City residents in Southeast Queens as part of a $6 million worth of resiliency improvements to deal with future storms like Superstorm Sandy.
How fitting for a rainy day - **Shawn Callaghan** and **Rory Fitzgerald** visited Hartford’s Mark Twain House to participate in a CT ASLA Green Infrastructure workshop. Regulators, designers, planners and engineers were in attendance to hear about interesting Low Impact Development projects and how to tackle stormwater infrastructure challenges. Both Rory and Shawn enjoyed the presentations and sessions, and Rory got cozy with Mark Twain himself (in LEGO form).

Arnie Bloch’s son **Daniel** just got engaged to his girlfriend…of either 5 or 25 years. He and **Marlo Dublin** have been dating for 5 years, but they actually met in 1st grade and have been best friends since that time. Congratulations to a couple made for each other!!

Did you see us in Providence? **Ken Livingston** was part of the Fundraising Committee for this fall’s SNEAPA conference in Rhode Island. **Ken** will also be serving on the 2015 SNEAPA Planning Committee. But he wasn’t the only FHIer there; SNEAPA regulars **Ruth Fitzgerald** and **Jill Barrett** facilitated a workshop on Inclusive Community Engagement, encouraging participants to get “hands-on” by developing inclusive outreach techniques for hypothetical projects.

**Laurel Stegina**, former President of WTS’s Connecticut Chapter, organized another successful WTS mini-series, with many FHI staff there to learn and network. **Susan VanBenschoten** and **Mary Miltimore** delivered a lively presentation of FHI’s Route 1 Corridor Study. Carol Gould, Shawna Kitzman, Stacy Graham-Hunt and **Anthony Zemba** also participated in this excellent event.

Who says 92 rainy miles over two major mountains isn’t fun? **Chris Henry** tackles a portion of the Tour de France route during an amateur bike race.

**Maura Fitzpatrick** spent Thanksgiving in gorgeous Sedona, Arizona.

**Ruth Fitzgerald** and husband **Dave** kayaking in Costa Rica.

We are excited to welcome two new additions to the FHI family, **Zachary Weiss** (pictured left with Josh’s wife **Stephanie** on Halloween) and **Ryan Walsh’s** son **Holland**, born November 15th (right).

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**Mosquitos, ticks, briars and mud – who would sign up for this?!?** Apparently, FHI’s **Shawn Callaghan**, who recently completed a Wetland Delineator certification through the Institute for Wetland and Environmental Education & Research in Massachusetts. The certification followed the US Army Corps. of Engineers wetland methodology and confirms his abilities to identify, assess and restore wetland systems, an integral piece of FHI’s environmental practice.

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**Did you see us in Philly?** **Melissa Pineda, Kristen Ahlfeld and Leslie Black** (not pictured) manned the FHI booth at this year’s Pennsylvania APA conference.

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Recent Wins

**Connecticut**
- Cold Brook Reservoir Wetland Delineation for the Metropolitan District Commission (with Black and Veatch)
- Waterbury Active Transportation & Economic Resurgence (THE WATER) for the City of Waterbury (with RBA Group)
- On-Call Engineering and Architectural Services for the Town of Waterford (with Horsley Witten Group)
- Route 8 Northbound Temporary Bypass Wetland Delineation for CTDOT (with HNTB)
- Clinton Amtrak Corridor Wetland Delineation for Amtrak (with URS)
- Bus Route and Operations Study for COGCNV (with Steadmill Hill Consulting)
- Route 110 Intersection Improvements and Realignment for the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council (with Tighe and Bond)
- Runway Safety Project for the Connecticut Airport Authority (with Jacobs)
- I-84 Noise Barriers Design for CTDOT (with Ammann and Whitney)
- Replacement of the Walk Bridge Over Norwalk River for CTDOT (with HNTB)
- Task Order Public Transportation Support Services for CTDOT (with VHB)
- I-787 Livable Corridor Planning Study for the Capital District Transportation Committee (with CHA)
- RFK Bridge Regional Traffic Study for the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (with WSP/HNTB JV)
- Long Range Transportation Plan for the Ulster County Transportation Council (with RSG)

**New York**
- Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery for the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (with Berger)
- I-95 Port Chester Design Improvements for the NYS Thruway Authority (with Parsons Brinkerhoff)
- New York State Freight Transportation Plan for NYSDOT (with RSG)
- NYCEDC On-Call Transportation Planning for NYCEDC (with HDR)
- Part 150 Studies for JFK/LaGuardia Airports for PANYNJ (with ESA Airports)
- Morris County Circulation Element for Morris County (with VHB)
- Route 4 Teaneck Road Bridge for NJDOT (with Gannett Fleming)

**New Jersey**
- On-Call Site Assessment/Design Study Services Statewide for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities for RIDOT (with Altu Planning Design)

**Rhode Island**
- Westlake Corridor Project for Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (with AECOM)

**Shawna Kitzman** finished three half marathons this year: in Austin, TX, Brooklyn, NY and Hartford, CT (pictured with husband Dave).

**Ken Livingston** hiking in Utah’s Zion National Park.

**Susan VanBenschoten** among the vines at Chateauneuf-du-Pape on her recent wine and food cruise to France.

**Ken Livingston**

**A cold three-hour tour!! Mike Morehouse, Chris Henry and Michael Ahillen** braved a chilly Saturday on a walking tour in Brooklyn to observe the progress that New York City’s first Vision Zero Symposium has made on the safety of the city’s streets. FHI staff provided input (including complete streets and planning/design solutions) to improve safety and mobility for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Well worth a little frostbite!!

**We love you too, NY! FHI staff were recognized for involvement on two projects at the APA NY Metro annual conference: the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program for Staten Island won the Meritorious Achievement Award, and the Sheridan Expressway Study won the Meritorious Service Award. (Both projects were worked on by staff in our NYC office before they were FHI). We love seeing our projects and our staff get recognized for excellence!**

**Melissa, Alvaro, & Austin Pineda** took a road trip from Miami to Key West, Florida, where they visited the Southernmost Point in the U.S.

**Staff Notes (Cont.)**

**Shawna Kitzman**

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**Susan VanBenschoten** among the vines at Chateauneuf-du-Pape on her recent wine and food cruise to France.

**Kristen, John, Maggie and Caroline Ahlfeld** enjoying their annual trek to the happiest place on earth!
A huge “Thank You” to all of our clients, partners and friends who ate, drank and made merry with us at our November Open House celebrating our new office space. We owe you all so much and look forward to celebrating many more happy milestones together! Among our 150+ guests were Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra (center with Susan and Ruth) and Lieutenant Governor, Nancy Wyman. We are grateful for your support and good wishes.