¡Pueblo de Bridgeton!! We rolled out our new Spanish translation of the Bridgeton Design Guidelines on Sunday Oct 6 with members of the CHABA team and visiting sociology professor Robyn Rodriguez, a specialist in immigration and assimilation studies at UC Davis.

Why is this such a big deal as to bring a professor here all the way from California? Because this translation, when officially adopted, will make Bridgeton the first historic district in the state (who knows? the first in the country maybe? somebody tell us!) to give Spanish-speakers and those whose second language is English full access to some of the savviest ways to repair homes in a registered historic district. We hope it will also help take some of the mystery and some of the scare out of living in an historic house--and out of confronting the officials whose job it’s supposed to be to preserve its architectural character as well as keep it a good, healthy place to live.

In the largest historic district in the state--over 2000 properties--where a growing 1st/2d generation immigrant population is rapidly moving from renters to owners, housing quality becomes not just a tool of inclusion, but of empowerment. Bridgeton’s fine yet inexpensive older housing stock in once and still proud working-class neighborhoods has made homeownership accessible to many striving and upwardly-mobile families. Protecting the value of these homes through treatments that respect their character yet are simple, inexpensive and sustainable can assure a better quality of life for such families--AND (as has been statistically proven) can make those purchases better economic decisions for the near and the long term.

CHABA says: Why shouldn’t working families in these communities enjoy the same benefits of beautiful streetscapes as folks in Montclair and Haddonfield? Historic preservation doesn’t have to be gentrifying, and it isn’t just for the rich. It preserves our collective community memory, and that is no small thing. But it can also help create new jobs, develop and preserve artisan skills, and help assure quality of life across whole neighborhoods now and for the future. ¡Adelante!

Coming soon: More on our workshops program PLUS CHABA supports the District Commission Historic Preservation Awards this November 13.

More at www.historicbuildingarts.org

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