U.S. Mayors Celebrate Preservation
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Cover photos clockwise from left:
The Daniels & Fisher Tower in Denver, Colorado (Photo: Jim Lindberg)
Benefit Street in Providence, Rhode Island (Photo: Michael Melford)
Main Street in Park City, Utah (Photo: Derek Satchell)
Introduction

Richard Moe

Much of the enormous success that preservation is currently enjoying can be attributed to the growing number of mayors who recognize preservation’s value as an effective tool for enhancing the livability and economic vitality of their communities. In this issue of Forum Journal, we’ve given some of those mayors an opportunity to tell you what preservation has accomplished in their cities.

With help from the staff of our regional offices, we compiled a list of communities whose mayors have played leadership roles in emphasizing preservation as a foundation for revitalization. The list included major urban centers such as Boston, Chicago, Denver, and Providence (site of this year’s National Preservation Conference) as well as smaller cities such as Eugene, Ore.; Beaufort, S.C.; and Park City, Utah.

We asked each mayor two questions: “How has preservation made a difference in your community?” and “Why should the preservation of historic resources be a priority for other city leaders?” The mayors, whose aggregate government experience totals almost 100 years, responded enthusiastically. Their answers are both instructive and heartening—and well worth reading.

While each community’s experience is unique, some common themes emerge. Many mayors recite a distressingly consistent catalog of ills—misguided urban renewal, suburban flight, widespread disinvestment in the center city—often culminating in the destruction of a significant landmark or neighborhood whose loss sparked a heightened awareness of the need to save the community’s heritage before it disappeared completely. Mayors are generous in acknowledging the important contributions made by local preservation organizations and volunteers. They also cite the important role played by regulatory provisions and financial incentives—including tax credits and abatements, grants and loans, changes to local building codes, and the designation of historic districts—as means of encouraging and supporting reinvestment and revitalization.

While the reports are overwhelmingly positive, one mayor strikes a cautionary note: In Beaufort—and doubtless in other places as well—successful revitalization is spawning a new set of troublesome issues, including the need to find effective ways of dealing with too many tourists and too much gentrification.

The mayors who appear in this journal are by no means the only “preservation-friendly” city executives in the country. The ranks of enlightened and visionary mayors who recognize the value of preservation are large and growing rapidly, a fact that offers enormous hope for the restoration of the urban fabric which has become so badly tattered in the past half-century.

The National Trust and other organizations are currently working with the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) to explore ways of building stronger, more productive relationships between preservationists and mayors. There’s strong historical precedent for this kind of partnership: It was a special subcommittee appointed by USCM that prepared the report called With Heritage So Rich which eventually formed the basis of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Thirty-five years later, more and more mayors have first-hand experience of what preservation can do—and, as this issue of Forum Journal makes clear, they’ve become some of its strongest advocates. That’s good news for everyone who cares about the future of America’s communities.
Preserving Providence’s Past to Create the City of the Future  Vincent A. Cianci, Jr.

Providence, R.I., with a sympathetic interplay of the old and the new—with an eclectic mix of property distinguishing our city from so many others—is a national model in the area of architectural preservation. It is also the city that will proudly host the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s annual conference this October.

When I first took office as mayor of Providence back in 1975, many of our historic treasures were slated for a very different fate from the one they enjoy today. With the flight to the suburbs so much a part of the American psyche, the demolition of the old in favor of new construction was a dominant theme. In 1960, in fact, an urban renewal plan entitled “Downtown Providence 1970” had been developed. It called for the massive demolition of a number of older downtown structures, including Providence City Hall. However, as a recent scholarly article points out, “...the city had neither the capital, the will, or the expertise to undertake redevelopment on the scale called for in the 1960 plan.” This inaction proved to be an important factor in the eventual revival of Providence.

With the exception of its founding by radical preacher Roger Williams back in 1636, the city of Providence’s most significant transformation began in the late 1970s. The city and preservationists, along with the private sector and community organizations, exerted the leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, and perseverance to retain and restore our architectural treasures, forming a coalition in which bold and often risky action was taken to alleviate the threats to Providence’s architectural and historic infrastructure.

More than two decades of concerted effort by preservationists and the political and business leadership have transformed Providence from a dying capital city into a dynamic and desirable destination spot. Today Providence is a city with beautifully restored historic architecture; with a vibrant and award-winning Arts & Entertainment District, offering tax breaks to artists living and working here; with a new network of riverwalks and ornate bridges linking the commercial center to Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the colonial neighborhood of College Hill; with some of the nation’s most highly acclaimed restaurants, many of which have been established by graduates of Johnson & Wales University’s outstanding culinary school here and with many receiving startup funding from the city; with a dramatic public sculpture called WaterFire Providence, which attracts thousands for hushed riverfront reflection after dark; with 50 acres of prime development sites along the revitalized rivers; and with new hotels, an outdoor public ice skating arena, and the grand Providence Place mall which opened in August 1999.

Bold Steps Promote a Preservation Ethic

Twenty-five years ago, this commercial and cultural mecca was a sprawling freight yard for a factory city. To shake off our industrial past, we relocated the railroad tracks and three rivers, transforming downtown Providence into a city of splendor, far removed from the uninspired suburbs. We have learned that the public spaces of a city are like the stage of a theater. With the flair of an impresario, we program outdoor concerts on a summer’s eye. We bring gondolas, canoes, kayaks, and dinner boats to our once-forgotten rivers. On festive evenings, we place police officers in dress uniforms on horse patrols. We worked with Fleet Bank to underwrite a public skating rink bigger than Rockefeller Center’s. In the heart of our downtown, the process of converting upper stories of 19th-century buildings into artists’ lofts is ongoing, fueled by numerous incentives including tax stabilization. We are also planning to relocate an interstate highway, which will free up more acreage for development and strengthen our ties to Narragansett Bay, affirming our vision for the future (which includes three “New Cities” in the planning stages).

A quarter of a century ago we opened the doors of City Hall to the preservationists, led by architectural historian Antoinette Downing. In reigning over the realm of historic preservation in Providence and
Providence, Rhode Island

establishing a model that earned her great respect nationwide, she left an indelible mark on our city. By preventing the razing of literally miles of our history, she raised our standard of living, transforming our city into one of a handful in North America whose historic architecture is not only intact, but celebrated. While Antoinette Downing died this past May at the age of 96, her more than 50 years of passionate dedication to preservation and restoration is apparent in the wealth of history that is so integral to Providence in the 21st century.

To preserve the unique character of Providence, we made historic restoration one of our foremost priorities. We quickly undertook an impressive restoration of City Hall, a stately Second Empire cast-iron and masonry structure faced with granite. Built in 1878 and dramatically restored in 1978 and again in 1992, Providence City Hall remains a fine example in 1878 and dramatically restored in 1992, Providence City Hall remains a fine example of our foremost priorities. We quickly undertook an impressive restoration of City Hall, a stately Second Empire cast-iron and masonry structure faced with granite. Built in 1878 and dramatically restored in 1978 and again in 1992, Providence City Hall remains a fine example of the period. By 1982 three other key historic buildings in the heart of our downtown—the Biltmore Hotel (just across the street from City Hall), the fire-ravaged Wilcox Building, and the massive 1828 Arcade (the nation’s first enclosed shopping center) had been returned to productive use by combining federal community development dollars with private sector funds. The implementation of an innovative Downtown Recycling Program, a low-interest loan program initiated by my administration in the late 1970s to save historic buildings in the downtown core, brought other neglected buildings in the heart of our city to new life.

By the mid-1970s, the grand structure that is now the linchpin of our flourishing Arts & Entertainment District, built as the Loew’s State Theatre in 1928, had closed its doors and was scheduled for demolition. Rising to the challenge, we enlisted the support of preservationists, members of the business community, and private industry to preserve the unique character of Providence, we made historic restoration one of our foremost priorities. We quickly undertook an impressive restoration of City Hall, a stately Second Empire cast-iron and masonry structure faced with granite. Built in 1878 and dramatically restored in 1978 and again in 1992, Providence City Hall remains a fine example of the period. By 1982 three other key historic buildings in the heart of our downtown—the Biltmore Hotel (just across the street from City Hall), the fire-ravaged Wilcox Building, and the massive 1828 Arcade (the nation’s first enclosed shopping center) had been returned to productive use by combining federal community development dollars with private sector funds. The implementation of an innovative Downtown Recycling Program, a low-interest loan program initiated by my administration in the late 1970s to save historic buildings in the downtown core, brought other neglected buildings in the heart of our city to new life.

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Roger Williams Park was founded when Betsey Williams, a descendant of Roger Williams, willed its original 100 acres to the city. Having expanded to its present 450 acres, by the mid-70s it, too, had fallen prey to neglect and disrepair. We have undertaken restoration of its buildings—including the now marvelously restored Casino (1887), Betsey Williams Cottage (1773), and Temple to Music (1924)—as well as public monuments, gardens, and grounds, and we have created a zoo now recognized as among the nation’s top 10. Our work was affirmed when the National Trust recognized our glorious urban park with its National Preservation Honor Award at last November’s national conference in Los Angeles.

Few cities have gone to the extent Providence has to protect, preserve, and restore our historic architectural heritage. The city’s rich array of historic architecture is like no other in the country. On the city’s “Mile of History” on Benefit Street, perfectly preserved colonial and Federal homes (which often serve as backdrops on NBC-TV’s hit show Providence) complement some of the city’s finest housing stock. Across town, Broadway and the Elmwood neighborhood offer some of Providence’s finest examples of Victorian architecture. Fiercely protected, the city’s historic residential structures are often open during walking tours held by the Providence Preservation Society.

Keys to Success

In rebuilding Providence, we brought back its best urban qualities, instead of converting it into a replica of an “edge city,” with no past, no glamour, no aspiration. We skillfully blended the old and the new, so that the new city is still Providence, uniquely reflective of our experience as a people. We never lost faith in our city, despite all of the difficulties of being urban in an age of suburbia.

But that, too, is changing. Between 1940 and 1970, Providence lost 40 percent of its population. Textiles, the jewelry industry, and retailing

Providence enjoys a rich array of architecture, including the city's "Mile of History" on Benefit Street, which often serves as the backdrop on NBC-TV’s hit show Providence.

Photo by Michael Melford, Providence Tourism Council.
In rebuilding Providence, we brought back its best urban qualities, instead of converting it into a replica of an “edge city,” with no past, no glamour, no aspiration.

Providence, Rhode Island

had left the city. With Census 2000 figures revealing that Providence realized the largest population growth of any New England city, we have reclaimed our historic position as the second largest city in New England. Much of this growth can be attributed to the action and leadership we took in creating a capital city that is resplendent in retaining so much of its history.

Along the way, we learned some important lessons.

First, the political and business leadership of the city made a long-term commitment to implement a strategy for renewal. It’s taken 20 years to create the new Providence that shines in the national spotlight, and there’s work still to be done.

Second, we weren’t afraid to think in the biggest possible way. We had to move railroad tracks, rivers, and interstate highways in order to create the city we wanted.

Third, we embarked on a coordinated, continual, and concentrated public and private effort to celebrate and preserve our historic architecture and our natural resources, thereby creating a unique urban center embraced by residents and tourists.

Fourth, we recognized that state and federal monies offered for highways and other infrastructure can often be put to the purposes of urban redesign. Over the last decade, more than $1.5 billion has been invested by public and private sources in downtown Providence.

Perhaps most important, we celebrated the urban characteristics of Providence rather than attempting to copy suburban models. Ethnic markets and restaurants, ornamental architecture, museums, live music and theater, art and artists, gleaming office towers, parks and open space...all are part of what makes a city uniquely urban.

Providence, in its bid for prominence in the 21st century, rediscovered the sources of its charm of centuries past. With a mixture of shrewd calculation, creative planning, and the preservation of our cherished historic architecture, we are winning anew the admiration of Rhode Islanders and capturing the hearts of visitors from around the country and the world.

Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., is mayor of Providence, Rhode Island.

In October of 2002, I hope you will come to the National Preservation Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Cleveland, Ohio. I think you will be surprised and delighted with Cleveland—its downtown, neighborhoods, suburbs, and surrounding countryside. We have received a great deal of positive press over the last few years for various notable civic achievements, such as the building of three major sports facilities and our renaissance of residential construction. You music lovers out there have seen the press on the new Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum (designed by I. M. Pei), and the rehabilitation of historic Severance Hall, the home of the Cleveland Orchestra.

What is less well known, but every bit as important, is how Cleveland has espoused a historic preservation approach to economic development and city planning. As mayor of this city, I know first-hand how critically important historic preservation, and its tools, has been to the renewal of hundreds of older, historic buildings. For over three decades, we have designated dozens of historic districts and hundreds of individual landmarks. Since 1981, 72 historic tax credit projects have been approved, representing more than $305 million in reinvestment in our historic resources. We estimate that an additional $266 million has been spent on projects that conform to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Rehabilitation. Historic preservation just makes good business sense!

Cleveland is a city with a rich history. The metropolitan area is home to 2.5 million people from more than 100 ethnic backgrounds. The architectural legacy of our ancestors remains in large measure. Our original New England-style public square (1796) is still the heart of the city. In the early 1900s, a City Beautiful civic mall plan was initiated that clusters seven impressive Beaux-Arts buildings around a vast green space leading to Lake Erie. We have more than 45 distinct city neighborhoods, and hundreds of spectacular historic

Michael R. White

“I know first-hand how critically important historic preservation, and its tools, has been to the renewal of hundreds of older, historic buildings.”

The remarkable comeback of Cleveland’s Playhouse Square, including the State Theatre seen here, represents one of the largest historic theater rehabilitation projects in the country. Photo by David M. Thum.

Cleveland, Ohio

The remarkable comeback of Cleveland’s Playhouse Square in the country. The rehabilitation project of the largest historic theater there, represents one of the largest performing arts centers in the country. David M. Thum.

During the 1970s, Cleveland suffered, as many cities did, from the impact of housing and commercial development. Five 1920-era vaudeville and movie houses was dark. Through a public-private partnership approach, which was virtually unheard of at the time, Cleveland has put these theaters back into service. Today Playhouse Square is the home to a number of performing arts groups and host to touring presentations. More than one million people attend the performances each year. With over 10,000 seats, Playhouse Square is the second largest performing arts center in the country, just behind Lincoln Center in New York. We believe that Playhouse Square is the largest historic theater rehabilitation project in the country. And economic impact studies show that this preservation project generates an additional $50 million of spending each year in the district. Playhouse Square Foundation owns and manages this extraordinary facility. This organization is a leader in the field of performing arts centers across the country.

Playhouse Square Project Sets the Stage

Many of you know the story of Cleveland’s Playhouse Square project. During the 1970s, Cleveland suffered, as many cities did, from the impact of the television. We found that our theater district that had宗教 buildings. Over the last 12 years, Cleveland has experienced an amazing renaissance with 2,500 new housing units downtown. In our neighborhoods, $3 billion—yes, billion—has been spent on housing and commercial development.

Tax Credits Aid Warehouse District and Historic Gateway Neighborhood

The historic rehabilitation tax credit available for income-producing properties has really helped to entice developers to older building stock. Cleveland’s historic warehouse district is a great illustration of the value of the credit. The district was designated as a local and National Register historic district in 1982 in an effort to stem requests to demolish buildings to create parking lots close to the then-new Justice Center. The area was a seedy section of town; it would take a lot of vision and courage to see what it could become.

Through the diligence of the Historic Warehouse District Development Corporation, and with support from the city of Cleveland, a master plan was developed which guided the rehabilitation of some 70 buildings over a 20-year period. Now the Warehouse District is full of life, with almost 1,500 housing units, many of them chic loft-style apartments, and more than 20 high-end and trendy restaurants and clubs. Fifteen historic buildings are now converted to offices. The Warehouse District is the place to be in Cleveland.

The lessons learned from our Warehouse District are being applied now to the historic area north of the new Gund Arena and Jacob’s Field. During the planning of these sports facilities, the adjacent area was designated as a local and National Register historic district. Furthermore, we developed legislation specifically designed to protect the yet-to-be-redeveloped older buildings against demolition for high-priced parking lots. We call it the “Think Twice Before Demolition” ordinance. The ordinance requires that the planning commission consider a number of factors before approving a demolition request, including the future potential of a building. The planning commission is also empowered to delay action for several reasons, including allowing time for economic viability studies to be conducted. The “Think Twice” ordinance has formalized a policy of creating innovative and economically viable new functions for vacant buildings, both in the neighborhoods and downtown.

Meanwhile, the city has been actively engaged in encouraging property owners to carry out historic rehabilitation of the over 100 buildings in this older commercial section of town. We have two excellent organizations pushing on this front—the Historic Gateway Neighborhood Corporation and the Downtown Cleveland Partnership. Thus far 25 building rehabilitations have been completed. Currently 730 units of housing are completed, under construction, or in the final phases of development.

One of the very interesting aspects of the Historic Gateway Neighborhood, as it is called, is that three arcades are now converted to three different hotels and offices. To spur these projects on, we allowed tax increment financing, which is typically reserved for affordable housing, neighborhood commercial revitalization, and industrial projects. The Old Arcade, a National Historic Landmark and one of Cleveland’s prized buildings, is now a Hyatt Regency Hotel, after a $60 million rehabilitation utilizing tax credits and a facade easement. Other national hoteliers attracted to these historic buildings are Marriott Residence Inn and Holiday Inn Express & Suites. Holiday Inn has redone 14 floors of an 1896 commercial bank and office building. With 18-foot ceilings and gigantic windows, this hotel is now a model for Holiday Inn Express facilities across the world. When you visit Cleveland for the Trust conference, make sure you stay in one of these hotels. Other developments along Cleveland’s old retail...
street, Euclid Avenue, include the conversion of 17 office buildings to housing. As I said earlier, you will be surprised and delighted with the creativity of some of our preservation projects.

Over the last decade, the city has received numerous proposals for downtown lakefront housing. We have gently rebuffed these proposals on the grounds that they did not support redevelopment of existing neighborhoods. Developers who are interested in meeting the downtown housing needs have been directed toward the city’s existing building stock. Certainly this has resulted in the resurgence of our Warehouse and Gateway districts.

Innovative Building Code Promotes Major Projects

There are a number of large-scale preservation projects that did not utilize the tax credit program but are nonetheless spectacular, high-quality projects. These include the conversion of the old Terminal Tower to Tower City Center ($110 million), the renovation of Severance Hall ($30 million), the Cleveland Public Library ($40 million), and the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland ($10 million).

Many of these projects would not have been possible without the development of Chapter 3408 of the Ohio Basic Code. Chapter 3408 is a flexible point system that allows historic structures to comply with modern health and safety rules without compromising the integrity of the building. A team from Cleveland, led by the city of Cleveland’s building commissioner, drafted this provision of the code. I understand now that other states are following suit with similar alternative codes. I believe what we have worked out here in Ohio is the best solution which protects the occupants of the building while it preserves the inherent health and safety features of the building. This code allows for excellent interaction with the historic tax credit rules. It also helps maximize the usable floor space in older buildings thereby strengthening pro formas.

Rebuilding Neighborhoods

Cleveland’s neighborhoods are not to be missed for the lessons they can provide in affordable housing and quality commercial revitalization. Cleveland’s neighborhood rebuilding efforts have long been recognized on a national level. We have 47 active community development corporations leading this charge. Cleveland is rated as one of the top four cities in the nation—along with New York, Boston, and Chicago—for the effectiveness of its CDCs. These CDCs have attracted over $308 million in reinvestment, much of it for historic preservation. We have very skilled nonprofit developers who regularly package complex projects utilizing a wide variety of financial incentives, including those available for historic preservation. The city has long combined commercial revitalization with preservation through our storefront renovation program. Since 1990, more than 73 commercial preservation projects have been completed.

One of the more recent miracle stories in our neighborhood is that of Notre Dame Academy, a $9.6 million historic rehabilitation project to provide housing for low-income senior citizens. The city-owned West Side Market was recently rehabilitated ($11 million) and continues to operate, one of the few such farmers’ markets in the country. You must stop by to see the incredible array of ethnic and exotic foodstuffs offered here since 1912. You must also stroll around Shaker Square, known as the country’s second planned shopping center (Kansas City’s Country Club Plaza being the first) and the commercial gateway to beautiful Shaker Heights. This lovely Georgian-style square has been refurbished for $25 million.

Help from the Cleveland Restoration Society

Our local historic preservation organization, the Cleveland Restoration Society (CRS), has been a valuable participant in Cleveland’s renaissance, continuously reminding us of our responsibility to preserve the past, and of the great opportunity preservation provides. Its various programs, notably the Neighborhood Historic Preservation Program, have been a great value-added service. Currently we are working with the CRS to push for a state tax credit for historic rehabilitation. CRS is heading up the task force in Cleveland that is working to get this on the state legislature docket. As you can see, I am committed to preserving Cleveland’s assets, and we need all the possible tools available to us.

Moving Forward

I don’t want you to think that historic preservation is without its challenges here, because we certainly have them! We have an incredible inventory of industrial buildings and artifacts (such as the Hulet Ore Unloaders) that present enormous difficulties to preserve and/or reuse. We are battling the problems created by urban sprawl, which is rampant here in northeastern Ohio. There have been important buildings lost, and our memories are long!

Nonetheless, you can tell from my story that we have been quite successful here in historic preservation in many important ways. It has been my great privilege to be the leader of this city, the “comeback” city. I can assure you, we will “roll out the red carpet” when you come to Cleveland in 2002.

Michael R. White is mayor of Cleveland, Ohio.
Denver: Preserving the Soul of the City

The preservation of Denver’s history is as much a part of my economic development strategy as are the arts, business retention and expansion, sports venues, and tourism. For, without preserving a critical mass of historic buildings, landscapes, and places, there would be no uniqueness to Denver to attract the other activities. Denver’s “soul”—the immaterial essence of this place—is revealed in its people, its history, and the buildings and landscapes people build over time.

The Challenge in 1991

The wellspring of Denver’s soul is our downtown. But by 1990 the exodus of families and businesses to the green fields of the suburbs had decimated our downtown. We were in danger of losing our wellspring.

In 1991 when I was elected to the first of three terms as mayor, the economic recession of the 1980s still gripped much of the city. The transformation of an old warehouse area into the Lower Downtown Historic District (now known as “LoDo”), a vibrant and trend-setting residential and recreation neighborhood, had begun. But for full flowering it needed substantial management and a strengthening of the partnership between the business community and City Hall.

As far as the central downtown was concerned, the old Central Bank Building, a designated Denver landmark, had been demolished to make way for a parking lot, as then customary on our entrepreneurial frontier. Downtown was littered with boarded-up, empty historic structures, quite probably waiting for the bulldozers. Its signature department store, the Denver Dry Goods building, was empty and had been purchased by the city to prevent demolition. But it was struggling to find potential tenants to trigger redevelopment.

Soon after taking office, I appointed an architect and preservationist, Jennifer T. Moulton, executive director of Historic Denver, Inc., as my director of planning and development, and supported an expanded professional preservation staff. And my first public policy action was to commit the city to the preservation and revitalization of Denver’s core—the Central Business District (CBD).

My first “Downtown Summit” rallied city government units and preservation and business constituencies to closer collaboration on two principal strategies—developing housing and expanding historic preservation as an economic development tool. A “Downtown Action Agenda” resulted which I used for policy decisions throughout my first term.

These are some of our accomplishments:

• The Denver Dry Goods building, a city symbol, was teetering on the brink of demolition. To ensure that the building would be renovated into a mixed-use housing/retail/office project, I directed that the Denver Visitors and Convention Bureau become, along with the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, an office tenant. This provided the critical financial foundation that allowed the renovation of the entire structure to proceed.

• Changes were made to the zoning code to support historic preservation. Most significant were the elimination of surface parking as a use-by-right (eliminating the incentive to demolish empty buildings), and the introduction of design standards and guidelines for the CBD. Unique to these changes was a provision to preserve sunshine on the 16th Street Mall—Denver’s linear “piazza”—which required minimizing shadows on the Mall itself, including a provision that new buildings must step back from the street edge. These requirements restored economic usefulness to existing, smaller historic buildings along the Mall. And the street is now lined with outdoor cafes that enjoy sunshine in the middle of winter.

I directed that substantially more public and private
Denver, Colorado

Resources shifted toward housing and the preservation of empty buildings. Zoning was changed to eliminate bonuses for plazas and atriums and instead offer new bonuses for housing and historic preservation. The Denver Urban Renewal Authority provided tax increment financing for housing and preservation projects. The city provided access to low-interest loans and, in some cases, grants. And the Downtown Denver Partnership provided technical support including conducting housing preference surveys and helping to find developers for potential projects. By 1996 more than $158 million had been spent on the renovation and rehabilitation of historic structures in the CBD, of which $16 million were public dollars. Today, more than 40 formerly derelict buildings have been restored, most as homes for new downtown residents.

More Help for Downtown

When I began my second term in 1995, I convened a second downtown summit to take stock. The main thrust of this summit was to reinforce progress made in downtown by preserving and revitalizing the surrounding neighborhoods, many of which contain the city’s oldest and most historically significant housing stock. Again, I held on to housing and historic preservation to underpin revitalization. Thus, in my 10 years in office, some 111 individual structures have become Denver landmarks (for a total of 302 so far), and 20 new historic landmark districts have been established, representing a 50 percent increase in such districts. New construction was made subject to more careful design review to ensure compatibility with existing historic fabric.

In addition to promoting the preservation of individual buildings, I increasingly sought to encourage city agencies to think in terms of sustained development. In 1998, when I announced the construction of a Civic Center Office Building to consolidate city agencies and functions, I made clear that the design of the new building was to incorporate, in a historically sensitive way, the existing Annex 1 building on the site. This was one of Denver’s best architectural examples of International Style. The new complex under construction incorporates this building and the whole area will be given Civic Center Historic District protection. My administration also adopted more protective guidelines for the Civic Center Park, the centerpiece of the city’s park system, and rehabilitated its monuments.

Losses and Lessons

We have suffered some losses during my time as mayor of Denver, but not without strong fights. When a national hotel chain purchased Zeckendorf Plaza, designed by I. M. Pei, the news was both good and bad. Zeckendorf Plaza had languished as an underperforming site for years. A portion of this mixed-use property was empty, victim of the exodus of department stores from downtown. The hotel portion was in serious need of upgrading to remain competitive. The purchase by the Adams Mark hotel chain meant the entire parcel would be redeveloped into a convention hotel, a much-needed facility for downtown. The bad news: a structurally unique building—the country’s first hyperbolic paraboloid—would be lost. While virtually every economic aspect of the project was extremely favorable, the debate over reuse of the paraboloid and the design quality of the replacement structure raged. In the end, the paraboloid could not be incorporated into the new project. But the new project has delivered on the promise to enliven the 16th Street Mall and provide convention hotel facilities. In hindsight, though, it is important to note that this project was delayed for nine months on design issues alone—a first for Denver. And the debate itself increased the public’s awareness of the value of both preservation and high quality architectural design in downtown.

Diverse Interests Back New Downtown District

As my third term began, in part because of losses like the paraboloid, I strongly supported the successful efforts toward the passage of a Downtown Historic District. This covered 43 individually significant historic structures, some of which had been previously landmarked but none of which enjoyed the protection against demolition offered by Historic District status. This Downtown District is unique in the country in its number of structures and in the city’s offering a property tax rebate to the owners of these buildings.

Central Business Districts are the “ground zero” of a city’s real estate economic potential. The “highest and best use” is rarely the retention of a historic building when zoning allows the construction of considerably more square footage. In recognition that the owner
of a historic property included within the Downtown District is potentially being denied significant economic gain, the Downtown District ordinance establishes a cap on the city’s portion of property taxes. Any excess over the cap will be rebated to the property owner. I understand that no other city in the country has established such an incentive for preservation and the prevention of demolition.

The Downtown District is unique both for proving that historic preservation can coexist with new construction in a CBD, but also in the way it has unified preservation, government, and business interests. With Historic Denver Inc., the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Downtown Denver Partnership, the Colorado Historical Society, many property owners, and my administration all in strong joint support, the ordinance passed the Denver City Council unanimously. This capped two decades of effort to sustain Denver’s core against the kinds of wholesale destruction that marked the urban renewal programs of the 1960s, which led to Denver’s first organized preservation activity.

Today in downtown Denver our tourists find a place unlike anywhere else—a place called Denver. The historian George Zabriskie once said: “As valuable as our past is to us, it must exist as we do, in the world of present realities.” In downtown Denver, our history is a present reality as it exists comfortably and proudly side by side with our present. And we have ensured, with the Downtown District, that history will exist as a present reality in our future.

As mayor, I believe that as goes your downtown, so goes your city. While I am proud of my personal efforts over the past 10 years, I am most proud of how downtown’s diverse, and sometimes conflicting, interests came together around this commitment to revitalize downtown and our adjoining neighborhoods. In so doing, we have brought back neighborhoods in which a full spectrum of our people have chosen to come back to live and work.

In the process, we preserved Denver’s soul.

Wellington E. Webb is mayor of the City and County of Denver, Colorado.

Louisville: Bringing People Back to the City

Louisville’s historic neighborhoods are urban treasures that reflect the city’s growth following its first settlement in 1778. Settlers at the Falls of the Ohio were followed by waves of immigrants, developing a thriving river-based mercantile economy that can be traced in Main Street’s cast-iron warehouse facades, the archeology of the old Portland Wharf, and stately Victorian houses on tree-lined boulevards.

The loss of historic references at the center of the city during the urban revitalization efforts of the 1960s and 70s led us to recognize that retaining and reusing the character-defining fabric of the city was a key to ensuring the city’s unique style and livability. Support for preservation took root and grew in Louisville’s traditional neighborhoods and culminated in the nomination of 13,000 structures to the National Register of Historic Places and the creation of five local preservation districts containing a total of 3,000 structures.

But preservation is more than just putting up historic markers and regulating architectural changes. It is using the past constructively to bring people back to the city where affordability, services, convenience, and general quality of life cannot be matched in sprawling subdivisions.

Making Downtown the Place to Live, Work, and Play

Public recognition and investment in infrastructure have spawned $5 million in private investment for the redevelopment of our historic Main Street. Pioneers in the private sector have also led the way, epitomized by Actors’ Theatre of Louisville’s dramatic revitalization of the old Bank of Louisville to become its main stage theater. The Louisville Science Center, housed in a 19th-century Main Street warehouse acquired by the city, has raised $7.6 million in private funding to create a whole new environment for learning that is fun.

But even more than this kind of partnering, we are now realizing the significance of our traditional neighborhoods

“Preservation has meant looking at the patterns of city development that brought housing, workplaces, and recreational opportunities together to create vibrant places to live.”
Louisville, Kentucky

Preservation is ... using the past constructively to bring people back to the city where affordability, services, convenience, and general quality of life cannot be matched in sprawling subdivisions.

as blueprints for making the city of Louisville the place to live, work, and play.

Beginning in 1991, while serving as county judge/executive, I championed a new comprehensive land-use plan called Cornerstone 2020. After an extensive process of citizen involvement, we are almost ready to adopt a land development code that calls for land uses to be considered in the context of design compatibility and traditional neighborhood development patterns that foster a livable city. This year, the U.S. Conference of Mayors honored Louisville as one of America’s most livable cities based on our efforts to bring people back to the city with new housing and other amenities.

Our Downtown Plan calls for developing new neighborhoods around historic focal points or landmarks, the character of which creates “memorable addresses” for people who want to live near their work, shopping, and a variety of entertainment venues including Waterfront Park and Louisville Slugger Field.

We created a $6 million Downtown Housing Incentive Fund, with half of that contributed by private sources, which has made the difference in bringing new mixed-use projects to our downtown, like Waterfront Park Place’s luxury condominiums on the Ohio River waterfront, Glassworks Lofts’ artists’ studios and loft apartment space, St. Francis High School’s redevelopment of the old downtown YMCA, and Firehouse Lofts where new loft apartments are located above an art gallery.

We have submitted a new $35 million HOPE VI grant application that will leverage $434 million for redevelopment of the Clarksdale public housing project east of downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods within a one-mile radius. Traditional neighborhood patterns have provided the template for new housing construction throughout the city. Coming on the heels of Louisville’s success in building a mixed-income neighborhood with another HOPE VI grant in the Park DuValle area, this plan calls for partnering among residents, public agencies, and private developers to rehab or construct more than 1,800 housing units and knit together the urban fabric. Rather than isolate poverty, we are crossing neighborhood boundaries to develop a unified and diverse city of many races and economic levels.

On Main and Market streets, close to our river roots, the city has purchased key parcels of land for redevelopment with a mixture of uses. Building upon the public investment in streetscape improvements, private sector use of federal investment tax credits has assisted rehab projects like the new Brown-Forman Corporation headquarters, the Frazier Firearms Museum, and Glassworks Lofts. The new Muhammad Ali Center will have a Main Street presence as well.

Further east—on “eMain”—a new high-tech neighborhood is centered on the $2.7 million renovation of the Clock Tower Building on the corner of Brook and Main as a center for e-business services. “eMain USA” is part of our vision to create a city that is vibrant and alive 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nearby, public investments are reclaiming our connection to the river at Waterfront Park and the adaptation of the historic B&O railroad depot to create Louisville Slugger Field as a state-of-the-art AAA minor league baseball ballpark.

These projects have established a climate for the rescue of “Whiskey Row,” old warehouses used to store whiskey barrels as they came off river barges. The spectacular block of Victorian commercial buildings is being
Reusing Our Industrial Past

We also have looked to Louisville’s history as a hub for river and rail transportation for new ideas. This October our Richardsonian Romanesque Union Station, built in 1895, will welcome the return of Amtrak passenger rail service for the first time since 1976. A task force has made recommendations for restoring as a public greenway the neglected environment of Beargrass Creek, where there had been a history of pollution from the slaughterhouses and meat packing plants, which gave the Butchertown neighborhood its name. Capitalizing on Frederick Law Olmsted’s legacy of parks and parkways that tie together our city’s neighborhoods and the river, an extension of Waterfront Park will link western Louisville with the downtown district along the river to complete Olmsted’s vision.

Downstream in the Portland neighborhood, plans for a unique archeological park are emerging for the Portland Wharf, long abandoned under fill-dirt with access cut off by a floodwall and interstate system. The new park will bring the neighborhood’s heritage alive for residents together, pooling resources, and renewing the call to “Come to the city.”

New Enthusiasm for City Living

Preservation in Louisville means “neighborhoods.” As one resident activist said in a recent story reported by the Courier-Journal, “City living is hip again, and come on back.” Preservation is part of an antidote to sprawl.

Preservation has meant looking at the patterns of city development that brought housing, workplaces, and recreational opportunities together to create vibrant places to live. Most recently, in the California neighborhood, construction of 48 new affordable homes on vacant lots acquired from the city has been linked with the rehabilitation of older homes, financing programs, and a leadership development program through the Housing Partnership, city of Louisville, and three local banks.

In Louisville, preservation means people working

Louisville, Kentucky

privately developed into a new boutique hotel, offices, retail, and housing.

Louisville’s historic Fourth Street—once the city’s retail and entertainment corridor—is returning to prominence. Plans for a new Entertainment District will get off the ground this year. Working with our urban renewal agency, the impressive Public Radio Partnership/HSA Broadband Building was purchased and renovated for a live broadcast studio, and we anticipate the redevelopment of the Henry Clay Hotel through an agreement with a private developer and hotel operator. Private investment has returned both the Palace and Brown theaters to their former glory as performance venues.

through compelling storytelling and research. The potential for adaptive use of the U.S. Marine Hospital, a National Historic Landmark, is being studied and, with the park, can become a catalyst for heritage tourism and neighborhood renewal.

Dave Armstrong is mayor of Louisville, Kentucky.
In Historic Boston, Preservation Is a Way of Life

In some places historic preservation is a passing fad. Old buildings are trendy for a while and then they’re replaced with more contemporary styles of architecture and design.

But that’s not the case in Boston. For us, preservation is a way of life.

Boston is a 400-year-old city that’s rich in history. It’s one of our greatest assets, and we know that the best way to keep our city growing is to preserve the best of the old and blend it with the new.

In Boston, our martyr for preservation was an entire neighborhood—a place of old brick buildings that people would love to be in today. Boston demolished the old West End neighborhood next to downtown in 1959. They cleared out the low-income people who called it home and erased that part of the city’s history forever. They saw the old buildings as problems and not possibilities. They thought that creating bigger modern buildings would make Boston a better place. And so the West End was cleared for a new sterile collection of towers in a brick park.

Boston’s preservation movement organized so that other historic neighborhoods wouldn’t come down. It’s no accident that Boston looks and feels the way it does. We protect our past and reuse historic buildings because we’re proud of them. We value them. We’re not willing to let them go if we can avoid it, and those values translate into policy decisions at City Hall. The City Landmarks Commission and seven historic district commissions are vigilant in their protection of our historic resources.

City’s Preservation Strategy Shows Results

When it comes to managing development, a city has two kinds of tools: the carrot and the stick. The carrot represents all the incentives we can dangle out there to get the private sector interested—from offering tax incentives and other kinds of gap financing, to maintaining infrastructure and increasing city services to reduce the amount of risk in a location.

But government has to lay down the rules, too. Public powers must be used to set priorities. In order to tap a city’s history to its fullest potential, investors must be steered down that road, and cities should forego demolition schemes or less desirable new projects that compete for the same investment dollars.

A couple of years ago, a prominent business leader in Boston came to me because he wanted to tear down a handsome and fully occupied century-old office building in the heart of our historic financial district. In its place, he wanted to put up a brand new office tower. I told him, “No thank you.”

Boston’s downtown has one of the lowest office vacancy rates of any downtown in America. We could use the extra square footage, but there are ways to make room for economic growth without letting go of our history. I have instead channeled new development to areas of the city like South Boston with its vast empty lots. In fact, putting a city’s history to productive use is a smart economic development strategy.

Boston’s neighborhoods are healthier today because of historic preservation. Healthy neighborhoods are what attract investment to our city. We’ve created 120,000 new jobs between 1992 and 2000.

Our quality of life is getting better. Our unemployment rate continues to be one of the lowest in the nation. And our crime rate is at the lowest level in decades.

But things weren’t always so good.

“Main Street” Successes

Back in the 1970s, you would have seen a different story: the effect of competition from the malls, the impact of the riots in the 1960s, the fear and flight of urban residents to the suburbs, disinvestments from redlining and arson, and the long-term effects of urban renewal disasters like highway projects that demolished cities in order to save them.

Five years ago, the National Trust and I launched the first citywide Main Streets Program. As a city councilor in the 1980s, I saw how small towns were using preservation to jump-start their local economies. They used the National Trust’s Main Street Program to save their old buildings, preserve their local economies, and build up a
We have to save our history for the people who will come after us, and we have to have the patience and the humility to work toward our goals one building, one block, one neighborhood at a time.

stronger sense of community. I saw what the program could do for one of our neighborhoods, Roslindale Village.

Today Boston’s Main Streets Program is thriving in 19 local business districts. As of summer 2001, we had restored or renovated 217 storefronts, creating 357 new businesses and more than 2,500 jobs. We restored historic buildings like Palladio Hall in Roxbury and Minot Hall in the South End Main Streets district. Those projects helped encourage more residents to live in those districts, and restored neighborhood pride and hope.

When we preserve and invest in a Main Street district, we need to think about the long-term effects. Preservation has a domino effect that can improve employment, housing, schools, and the quality of life in a neighborhood. The skeptics said we couldn’t bring change to certain parts of the city. But we are proving them wrong. All over Boston, we are rebuilding our neighborhoods.

Over a year ago, nearly 1,600 people from across the country came to Boston for the National Town Meeting on Main Street. Boston was the perfect backdrop for this conference. Everyone wanted to know about Boston’s success stories. I hope that each participant learned that every city in America has the opportunity and choice to preserve its own Main Streets. It’s not a matter of getting more money. It’s about investing those dollars in a smart, creative way.

For every dollar spent in a Main Streets district, 60 cents is reinvested in that neighborhood. Compare that to a big-box retailer like Wal-Mart, which invests only six cents for every dollar back into the neighborhood. So when we preserve the best of our past and hold on to our neighborhood character, we can create new opportunities for an entire community.

Making Urban Living Desirable and Affordable

As many of you know, urban renewal created some of our nation’s ugliest housing developments, and Boston was no exception. But we are getting rid of those housing complexes and replacing them with new townhouses that fit the traditional scale and feel of the neighborhood. One is Orchard Gardens, and another is Mission Main. By getting rid of those neighborhood eyesores and creating buildings that people want to live in, we are generating new growth and neighborhood pride.

Housing is a top priority. One of Boston’s biggest problems is that we are land starved. So we have to be very careful about how we fill in vacant lots and how we rehab our buildings. In Boston, we are using preservation to help create more homes that working people can afford. We’ve cut the number of abandoned houses in half by working with property owners to get them going.

All across the city we are saving older building so that hard-working families can live in Boston during the good times. We turned a 1921 office building in Chinatown into affordable housing using a preservation grant and an $800,000 historic tax credit. We converted a 1904 red brick school building in the Italian North End into affordable housing for seniors. We restored the old piano factory for artist studios. We created the Grandfamilies House in Dorchester.

We have to use creative ways to keep urban living desirable without pricing people out. We don’t want cities for only the very rich and very poor, with no middle class. To help maintain the income diversity in our neighborhoods, we have many different Home Owners Assistance Programs: Home Center, Homebuyers Programs, and we have a list of city-owned property for sale.

The residency requirement for Boston’s city employees has helped stabilize our neighborhoods. More than 18,000 people work for the...
city. And even when they leave their jobs at City Hall, they remain in their neighborhoods. They know that Boston is a great place to work, live, and raise a family.

We dangle a carrot to get property owners to help stabilize their neighborhoods and preserve our city’s aging housing stock. Boston’s Historic HomeWorks Program does a great job helping people rehab homes that are 50 years old and older. We provide grants of up to $7,500 for income-eligible residents who repair the exterior of their homes in historically sensitive ways.

Since October 1998, 165 houses have been restored, and another 20 are expected to be completed this fall. Every project inspires neighbors to do their part too. It creates a domino effect across the entire neighborhood and house-by-house a neighborhood begins to shine. Every renovated house reduces crime, improves an entire block, and provides a much-needed home to another family. A little preservation can bring new life and investment into a neighborhood.

A Long-Term Vision

We’ve learned our lessons from urban renewal. We know that we can’t just demolish our history and then put something up that doesn’t help our city. And today, Boston is still trying to stitch our city back together. We’re tearing down the old highway that cuts through six neighborhoods and cuts downtown off from Boston Harbor. It is the most exciting urban redevelopment project happening in any American city today. When it’s completed in 2005, for the first time in over 50 years, Boston will once again be connected to the water’s edge.

If we’ve learned anything over the last century, it’s that quick fixes to complex urban problems cause more harm than good. If we want to do what’s best for our city’s future, then we have to think long-term. We have to save our history for the people who will come after us, and we have to have the patience and the humility to work toward our goals one building, one block, one neighborhood at a time.

Thomas Menino is mayor of Boston, Massachusetts.

Beaufort: Caring for “the One We Love the Best”

Beaufort entered the 21st century as the county seat of the fastest-growing county in South Carolina. The recent census also tells us Beaufort County is the richest county in South Carolina. Forty years ago it was the poorest. If you have concluded from those three statements that we have lots of real estate developers here, you would be correct.

But all Beaufort isn’t new. We are the stewards of a history that includes engagements in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The Federal Navy took Beaufort for its Civil War blockade headquarters. Instead of burning our mansions, the naval officers confiscated them and used them for their houses and headquarters and hospitals. That saved the buildings.

In the hundred years after the war our buildings were protected by our poverty. We couldn’t afford urban renewal. Unfortunately in many cases we couldn’t afford to ward off the termites either. Then, as affluence dawned in the 1970s, we protected 350 acres of our historic city by seeking a National Historic Landmark designation. That designation, and all that is attendant to it, has preserved and protected much of what was left here from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The effort to seek the nomination was led by a nonprofit group called the Historic Beaufort Foundation. The group is still around and stronger than ever. When they can, they buy and fix up important buildings in the district that are endangered. They run two museums. They are a resource to all the owners of historic buildings. And they are an advisor to the government on everything from land use to garbage collection, especially when what the government does has an impact upon the historic district.

In Beaufort’s historic district, people live more closely together than they do in the other residential parts of Beaufort. Because it mostly “grew up” instead of “being developed,” it’s a trick to figure the district’s densities. The conventional wisdom is that it is 11-16 dwelling units per acre.

“Bill Rauch

Our historic district has brought to Beaufort millions of visitors who would never otherwise have visited Beaufort.”
Managing—and Respecting—Our Historic District

Our historic district has brought to Beaufort millions of visitors who would never otherwise have visited Beaufort. It has brought major motion picture production companies here to use our streets and buildings for their scenery. The movies have brought more visitors. Being old is an industry.

Predictably, there were problems along the way. For many years the poorest part of the district wasn’t—in practice—subject to the rules of the district. Living by the rules that were set up to protect the big houses was too costly for poor people. The government, being compassionate, blinked. So some buildings that mightn’t have been lost were lost.

Then we found a better way. With the help of the residents of the district, we divided the district and made more affordable rules for the part where the more modest historic houses are. Because government took the time to be led by the governed, the new system is working. I know that because, before that process, the government couldn’t get a demolition-by-neglect ordinance passed, and after the process we could and did.

To keep the historic downtown up with the Wal-Marts on our outskirts, we brought in a Main Street, USA program. It has done that, and more. Thank you, National Trust. Main Street, Beaufort is another valuable advisor to the government on everything from downtown parking to trash collection.

Our preservation success has brought with it not just dollars for our shopkeepers, but the tourists themselves who spend those dollars. With the help of both Main Street and the Historic Beaufort Foundation, we finally had to impose tourism controls. Tourism controls are a delicate balance, one that is readjusted constantly.

Our historic district is a museum of a sort. But it’s a living museum. Real people live in the houses in the district. They raise children in those houses. They take their meals there and go to bed there. They garden in their yards. They are entitled to expect a certain decorum on their streets.

In some ways the district is like a great-grandmother. Being with her and viewing the way we lived through her eyes is a unique privilege. But her health comes first. If she doesn’t feel like talking, let her rest. If she starts to get angry, get out of her way as gracefully as possible.

Too many tourists on busses made the old gal angry. So too did a big film crew that stayed too long. We passed laws that limited the size of the busses and what the film crews could do.

We have struggled with rising taxes. Taxes in the historic district have risen not because the government, I’m proud to say, has raised them. Property tax bills have gotten higher recently because the value of the properties has risen. Hundred-and-fifty-year-old buildings in Beaufort are like blue chip stocks. At the last reassessment our historic district (as a tax map block) had risen faster than any other part of town. Rich people, poor people, elderly people on fixed incomes, and young couples just starting out all want to live in our historic district. Higher taxes is a problem that comes with success.

As the real estate developers made more and bigger projects just outside our historic district we began to picture our district as a low-rise traditional neighborhood surrounded and maybe even smothered by new projects. Wanting to avoid the smothering, we worked hard to protect the context of the district.

Where a border of the district was along one side of a street, we moved to put controls on the street’s other side. Where the border is a river, we have begun to seek to control the buffering, scale, and mass of new buildings on the river’s other side.

Old Ways Inspire New Urbanists

Success, which was a surprise itself 20 years ago, brought a surprise recently. Architects and town planners and real estate developers from other places began coming to Beau-
...community planners took note that rich people and poor people, elderly people on fixed incomes and young couples just starting out all want to live in our historic district.

Bill Rauch is mayor of Beaufort, South Carolina.

Chicago: Leading America’s Urban Renaissance

Chicago’s historic buildings do much more than remind people about the city’s history. They are an essential part of our approach to economic development, providing opportunities for employment, tourism, investment, and an improved quality of life. After more than a decade as mayor of Chicago, it is clear to me that preserving the city’s past is preparing for the future.

Long before urban America defied “expert” predictions and started luring families back to the city—a trend that helped add more than 100,000 new Chicago residents between 1990 and 2000—Chicago landmark officials were already taking stock of the city’s physical assets. Surveyors undertook the yeoman’s task of inventorying every pre-1940 building within city limits, determining the age, condition, architect, style, and historic merit of each one.

The 12-year project, known as the Chicago Historic Resources Survey, concluded in 1995 with a detailed list of more than 17,000 structures possessing historic or architectural value. Today the survey provides a road map for determining which buildings need legal protection from demolition or alteration and which can be used as anchors in neighborhood revitalization.

What’s remarkable about many of these structures is how they invoke a sense of timelessness rather than age. For example, the historic Michigan Avenue streetwall along Grant Park remains one of the most enduring images of Chicago. The Loop, home to the world’s largest collection of early “skyscrapers,” continues to draw businesses, residents, and tourists downtown. And thriving historic neighborhoods stand resilient to housing trends that are diminishing the city’s outlying suburbs.

When people talk about coming back to the city, this is what they’re coming back for—not cookie-cutter vinyl-clad homes with treeless front yards, or vanilla-box office buildings and stores constructed around barren parking lots and flood retention ponds. They want well-built, quality housing in dynamic, walkable neighborhoods; places with healthy and attractive businesses and insti-
Proposed for designation as a landmark district, the historic Michigan Avenue streetscape along Grant Park remains one of the most enduring images of Chicago. Photo by Bob Thall Photography.

Chicago, Illinois

tutions, parks and schools—the Chicago that not only survives, but thrives.

Preservation Incentives

Preservation efforts in Chicago have grown considerably since the formation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in 1968. Since then more than 4,600 properties have been made official Chicago Landmarks, including 165 individual buildings, sites, and objects, and 32 districts. But while early preservation efforts were focused on saving Chicago’s legendary architecture, today’s focus is on economic growth. Landmark preservation is used as a tool to stimulate private investment and neighborhood revitalization.

To that end in 1992 I merged the landmarks commission with the city’s economic development and planning departments, which keeps our preservation officials in constant contact with city planners and economic development coordinators. The merger expanded the commission’s focus from being primarily a regulatory agency to being more interdisciplinary and proactive, with access to a variety of economic development tools.

One of our most effective new programs is the “Class L” property tax incentive for the rehabilitation of landmark structures, an abatement that lowers the tax burden on landmark buildings and enables owners to allocate more of their resources to maintenance and capital improvements. With tax savings for an individual property ranging from thousands to millions of dollars over a 12-year period, the Class L incentive leveraged more than $300 million in private investment in its first two years alone. The improvements also resulted in higher property tax revenues from the participating buildings despite the lower assessment levels.

Another tool actively marketed by the city is the federal investment tax credit program for historic rehabilitation. We’re committed to using it on all city-assisted development projects, especially given the federal government’s drastic cutbacks in other forms of urban development assistance over the last decades. In the process we’ve been able to leverage more than $400 million in private funding for projects citywide.

We also created a fee waiver for owners of landmarks that waives all permit fees for rehabilitation work. It can offer substantial savings for major rehabilitation projects as well as an appreciative gesture to homeowners undertaking smaller projects.

Finally, our most effective “preservation” tool is not strictly a preservation mechanism: tax increment financing, or “TIF.” Created by state-enabling legislation, TIF allows the city to capture new property tax growth within a designated redevelopment district for 23 years and to use the annual increase to help property owners and businesses within the district to make improvements. Numerous historic buildings across the city have directly benefited, including apartment and office buildings, theaters, stores, and other structures. On average, for every dollar the city commits to a project within a TIF district, the private sector spends six. That’s the leverage we want, the leverage that creates economic growth.

Combined, all of these tools form a comprehensive strategy for citywide revitalization. Sometimes used in tandem with an aggressive city acquisition and disposition process, these tools have proven highly effective in encouraging preservation projects downtown and in Chicago’s outlying neighborhoods.

Downtown Growth

Perhaps nowhere are Chicago’s landmark structures being redeveloped more rapidly than in the central business district. The work, part of a comprehensive plan to add vitality to the city’s center, is projected to increase the downtown population by 50 percent, or an additional 50,000 people, by the end of the decade. We’ve allocated $150 million in TIF grants alone for the rehabilitation of more than a dozen historic office buildings in the Central Loop. The city also resurrected the downtown theater district with $55 million in TIF assistance for the redevelopment of four opulent historic theaters. In total over 35 city-assisted projects involving the rehabilitation of historic buildings are planned, under construction, or recently completed.

Other initiatives include the listing in the National Register of Historic Places of the Loop Retail Historic District, about 100 buildings that form the core of the downtown. Implemented as an economic development and marketing tool, the designation draws public attention to the district’s revitalized State Street shopping district and Jewelers’ Row, department stores, boutique hotels, and numerous educational and cultural institutions.

Neighborhoods and Schools

Chicago is a city of nearly 200 neighborhoods, each with its
1998 commemorates the area’s remarkable past, when the “Great Migration” of the 1910s-20s brought thousands of Southern blacks to Chicago’s “Black Metropolis,” a city-within-a-city built by and for African-Americans. But its fortunes dimmed starting with the Depression, and years of disinvestment followed.

Today this district’s surviving buildings are leading its comeback, most notably witnessed in the conversions of the historic Wabash Avenue YMCA into housing, the Chicago Bee Building into a branch library, and the threatened Eighth Regimental Armory as the nation’s first public ROTC academy. Such work has led to other projects along the neighborhood’s commercial corridor, including the first infill development to occur in decades, and the restoration of the area’s historic housing stock.

Of vital importance, the city doesn’t just sit on the sidelines in these efforts, but also demonstrates responsible stewardship of its own historic properties—a commitment evidenced by our ongoing historic renovation programs for our public buildings, historic parks and fieldhouses, streetscapes, and even our unique collection of bridges.

First and foremost is the role preservation plays in my number one priority: the reform of the Chicago Public School system. Of all the things we do to revitalize Chicago neighborhoods, nothing is more important than the work involving schools. When you rebuild one of the city’s schools, many of which are more than 100 years old, you rebuild a community from the inside.

Over the past five years, the city and school system have pursued the nation’s most ambitious school redevelopment program, spending more than $1.8 billion and procuring an additional $1 billion for further work. It’s resulted in 15 new schools, 29 additions, 27 annexes, and more than 1,100 renovations. The work, more than 80 percent funded by city taxpayers, includes a system-wide exterior rehabilitation program to preserve the appearance of our historic neighborhood schools.

Preparing for the Future

While Chicago’s preservation efforts have accomplished a lot for the city and its residents, much work still needs to be done. I have challenged city staff to continue building on our past successes, whether it’s using existing preservation incentives in new and creative ways or developing new ones.

For example, we recently created a TIF district to save the threatened Tree Studios and Medinah Temple auditorium from certain demolition, and we’re using the historic tax credits to rehabilitate a modern 1966 public housing project which will be the largest tax-credit project of its kind in the country. City staff are completing a historic resources survey of post-war buildings to complement previous survey efforts. And to preserve one of the most common styles of single-family homes, the Chicago bungalow, we created a special incentives package that will help keep these attractive pre-war buildings around for years to come.

I firmly believe that historic preservation is an economic development strategy that’s essential to the health and well-being of urban America. By positioning this effort as one of economic revitalization, we are assuring that Chicago’s rich urban fabric will not only benefit today’s generations but those for years to come.
Dallas: A New City Discovers Its Past

Dallas is the new American city. It’s a diverse center for business and culture—a vibrant place to live and work. Given our growth over the past few decades, we’ve built “newer” and “bigger” projects. However, over the last several years, we’ve also realized that the places of our past add to the fabric of our community. Historic preservation has become a tool for increased economic activity. We’re reclaiming historic inner-city neighborhoods, bringing many landmark buildings back with creative adaptive use, and improving some of Dallas’s public assets as real showplaces and public gathering centers.

As a city government, we have endorsed individual projects and increased confirmed historic protections. With creative developers willing to revitalize historic buildings, dedicated homeowners in historic districts, and private organizations such as Preservation Dallas and the Friends of Fair Park, we have turned a corner and made the past part of our future.

New Ordinance and Historic Tax Incentives Increase Preservation’s Pace

The speed of preservation has increased over the last several years. Following the demolition of the Dr. Pepper headquarters building in 1996, preservationists set out to develop and pass a stronger historic preservation ordinance. Championed by City Council Member Veletta Forsythe Lill, the new ordinance set up a process for action against demolition by neglect, streamlined the process of obtaining a certificate of appropriateness for routine repairs, revised the process and rules for historic designation, and established a preservation fund. The new ordinance made it more difficult, although not impossible, for historic buildings to be demolished. The Dallas city council passed the ordinance unanimously in January 2000.

The first challenge to the updated ordinance occurred almost immediately. When the landmark commission denied a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the property owner appealed the decision to the Dallas city council and complained of the burdensome procedures of the landmark commission and its subcommittees.

After months of contentious debate and community meetings, the council voted to update the ordinance to take the appeals out of its hands and return them to the city’s planning and zoning commission, where politics would play a smaller role in any decision. Furthermore, the council updated the procedures of the commission and its subcommittees to ensure uniformity in all proceedings.

The new ordinance, coupled with the efforts of many farsighted developers using City Historic Tax Incentives programs, have increased local landmark designations. Significant projects involving historic buildings have included the redevelopment of the Wilson Building by Post Properties, the Kirby Building by Hall Financial Group, and the Magnolia Oil Building by Steve Holtze. More such projects are on the way, including redevelopment of the former Mercantile Complex as a huge housing and retail complex. Downtown Dallas has found new energy through the 17,000 people who call it home.

The Beginnings: Historic Districts

Dallas’s historic preservation efforts really began with the passing of the first historic preservation ordinance in 1973. At that time, the city created the landmark commission and the Swiss Avenue Historic District, which was the city’s first historic district. The stately mansions on Swiss and the vintage houses on Bryan Parkway, La Vista, and Live Oak had deteriorated. It’s said that vacant lots on Swiss then sold for more than those with houses, because it spared new owners the cost of demol-
Dallas, Texas

ishing a house of little worth. Now the Swiss Avenue Historic District is one of the premier historic districts in the United States.

Two other historic districts were established soon after: the West End Historic District in downtown Dallas, an area of office and warehouse buildings now converted into an entertainment/office/residential district; and the South Boulevard/Park Row Historic District in South Dallas, an African-American neighborhood of stately homes first developed by many of Dallas's leading Jewish families. This area is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a historic district this year.

In 1978 the Dallas city council made an audacious move and “back-zoned” more than 100 blocks in East Dallas, returning them to single-family zoning—the largest move of its kind in the nation. This created an environment for the redevelopment of other historic neighborhoods, including Munger Place and the Peak Suburban Addition.

Today Dallas is home to more historic districts than any other city in Texas—18 historic neighborhoods in all. These neighborhoods have reached varying degrees of success, preserving many different styles of homes. They include Winnetka Heights in Oak Cliff, Dallas's largest historic district with more than 1,000 homes. The city's newest historic district is Wheatley Place, designated in 2000, an African-American neighborhood in South Dallas that features bungalows built in the 1920s and 1930s.

There are also eight conservation districts, which are governed by less stringent historic overview. In total, more than 6,000 households exist in historic and conservation districts. The property owners represent a diverse spectrum of Dallas citizens, and each neighborhood has its own goals, attitude toward self-determination, and ideas about how to approach preservation. And, as the mayor, I know that most of the people who choose to live in historic areas don’t want “preservation lite.” They’re committed to their ordinances and to strong preservation standards.

However, we’ve found that historic designation isn’t the answer by itself. Some districts, such as the Tenth Street Historic District, struggle as contributing structures continue to deteriorate. It takes champions and hard work to bring back a historic neighborhood.

Historic Tax Incentives and Reclaiming Downtown

Our unsuccessful efforts to get Boeing to relocate its headquarters here told us what we already knew—we still have work to do in downtown Dallas revitalization. Dallas likes a challenge. It makes us re-dedicate ourselves. We know we need to ensure the further redevelopment of cultural institutions in the Arts District, intensify efforts to develop the Trinity River Corridor, and redevelop historic buildings on Main Street to make downtown Dallas a vibrant place to work, live, learn, and play.

Although much of the development will be new construction, saving significant structures will enhance downtown. Dallas's Historic Tax Incentives programs, renewed in 1997 with the support of Preservation Dallas and the Central Dallas Association, have had a significant impact. Since 1994, 197 historic projects were approved, resulting in $216 million in reinvestment and redevelopment. For every $1 of public investment, $10 in private investment was generated, and the city recaptured its investment in 1.8 years.

The Historic Tax Incentives and Neighborhood Revitalization Incentives were renewed and revised in April 2001 to provide focus for incentives in downtown Dallas and for homeowners in National Register Districts and local Dallas Historic Districts. It was our pleasure as elected representatives to have many developers tell us that the incentives made their deals possible. We expect these incentives to have an impact greatly increasing revitalization efforts in downtown and inner-city neighborhoods in the next three-year cycle.

Saving Fair Park: Dallas’s Crown Jewel

Another significant preservation effort has been renovating...
and restoring Dallas’s Fair Park, a National Historic Landmark and home of the largest collection of Art Deco buildings in the United States. In 1993 the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Fair Park as one of the nation’s “most endangered historic places.” The situation was so dire that it was listed again the following year.

The Friends of Fair Park, established in 1984 to both preserve and increase the usage of the 1936 Texas Centennial site, developed a Unified Funding Plan that suggested sources for the massive amounts of money needed to rehabilitate the deteriorating structures. The plan was subsequently approved by the city council. Building a politically active coalition, the organization has lobbied and won federal, state, city, and private investments totaling almost $100 million since 1993.

Friends of Fair Park have been champions for the new national Women’s Museum: An Institute for the Future, which opened in the former Fair Park Administration Building in 2000. Restoration of the Tower Building, the Centennial Building, and the Band Shell; restoration of murals; and many more such projects are complete or on the drawing boards. Fair Park attendance has soared from 2.3 million in 1995 to more than 6.8 million in 2000. And Fair Park is center stage in Dallas’s bid for the 2012 Olympics.

Controversy and Building a Preservation Ethic

One might say that Dallas has had an awakening about preservation; that it is beginning—through successful projects, collective effort, and public/private partnerships—to have a preservation ethic. I would agree that’s true.

But preservation is not without controversy. In a relatively young city that strives to be “world class,” there are some who oppose any limitation on development.

There are also those who oppose any limitation on property owners’ rights, and we may have many more battles in the future. It is controversial to designate a building against the wishes of the property owner. But in the last two years, the city council has designated part of St. Ann’s Church (a significant cultural landmark to our Hispanic community), and the main building of Dallas High School/Crozier Tech, both against the wishes of the owners. These were both highly contested battles.

And there are preservationists who are too extreme, who would make it too difficult to preserve and to adapt historic buildings for new uses. Preservation in Dallas is not without controversy. But a winning track record strengthens our position that preservation is a strategy that works.

Dallas may not have the lengthy history of other great American cities. However, as a “new” city, we’re laying claim to our history—and ensuring that those who would preserve it, can.

Ronald Kirk is mayor of Dallas, Texas.

Preservation Spurs Renaissance in Dayton

Mike Turner

In Dayton, Ohio, the importance of historic preservation as a community revitalization tool is evident. Eight nationally and locally designated historic districts are among the most desirable places to live in the city, and major projects with a historic preservation component are revitalizing downtown and bringing new residents and businesses into the city.

Rehabarama

One of our most successful neighborhood revitalization projects is Rehabarama, which received a National Preservation Honor award from the National Trust in 1996. First conducted in 1993, this public/private partnership targets an area of one of our historic districts and assembles a team to concentrate resources in the vicinity. Abandoned or severely dilapidated historic homes are acquired by the Neighborhood Development Corporation or by CityWide Development Corporation, the lead city agency for Rehabarama. The structures are completely rehabilitated by local home builders and developers, who follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the local design ordinance. These refurbished homes are furnished by local decorators and then opened for public tours.

The Rehabarama concept has brought many benefits to Dayton. Fall 2001 will see our fifth Rehabarama, and more than 15,000 people are expected to visit the restored homes. These people, often from the suburbs, discover the quality of our housing stock and the charm of our neighborhoods. We take the opportunity to provide information about other innovative housing options in the city’s historic districts and elsewhere. The media, such as The Dayton Daily News are involved in the event as sponsors so their reporting further extends the public relations benefit.

Because the Rehabarama homes are for sale and successfully sold every time, each program brings new residents into the historic neighborhoods. Existing residents are excited about the elimination of problem properties, and they gain

Mike Turner

“Along with repopulating our neighborhoods and strengthening our tax base, historic preservation is providing a boost to downtown redevelopment in Dayton.”
Rehabarama, which we call Citirama.

Citirama combines the restoration of historic homes with historically sensitive new construction on nearby vacant lots. Our first Citirama, in 1997, was in Wright-Dunbar Village, an area rich in history but poor in investment. This area is the former home to Orville and Wilbur Wright and the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. In 2003 we will be celebrating the 100-year anniversary of powered flight in this neighborhood.

As historic homes were purchased and rehabilitated by the city, other abandoned historic structures were offered to the public for sale for $1 through a lottery system. Purchasers were required to finalize a historically appropriate rehab and live in the home for at least five years. Since 1997, 25 new homes have been built and 41 homes restored in Wright-Dunbar Village. The average purchase price for the new construction homes in 2001 was $150,000.

Another successful Citirama project involved the integration of historic buildings with new construction. One of the most stately mansions within the city limits, Red Oak at the Hook Estate, a Neo-Tudor home built in 1931 by the founder of the Standard Register Company, had been vacant for many years. The city purchased the home and the extensive grounds. Red Oak was sold to a couple who restored the home, and the rest of the estate was parceled for upscale new development. The project provided the homebuilders with an opportunity to display their high-end product to the community and gave dedicated city residents a place to build impressive homes without moving to the suburbs.

Citirama at the Hook Estate was an enormous success: 22,000 people viewed both the restoration and the

The economic impact of Rehabarama has been tremendous. In McPheron Town, where the first Rehabarama was held in 1993, restored homes now sell for almost $200,000. In one instance a condemned home was purchased for $8,500, and about $100,000 was put into a high quality rehab. The property is now appraised at $197,000. The neighborhood has become such a desirable place to live that three new infill homes were sold before construction was finished. Also, the Neighborhood Development Corporation has rehabilitated an abandoned historic school into high quality, unique, affordable apartments, which have an extremely low vacancy rate and bring tax-paying young professionals into the city.

Besides the physical improvements, the positive promotion for the city, and the economic spin-off, Rehabarama has provided an opportunity to form important partnerships that have created other successful ventures.

Citirama

With the Home Builders Association of Dayton and the Miami Valley, the city of Dayton Rehabarama has undertaken an expansion of

new neighbors committed to protecting housing values by participating in neighborhood projects.

The advent of Rehabarama has been an impetus for existing homeowners to improve their own properties in anticipation of visitors. This neighborhood-wide fix-up is enhanced by home improvement contests with cash prizes, low-interest loans, and other incentives. The neighborhood is also targeted for free rehab work offered by groups such as the “Christmas in April” volunteer assistance program. Everyone benefits, long-term residents as well as the new homeowners.

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Dayton’s innovative neighborhood revitalization project, Rehabarama, promotes city neighborhoods and housing stock. These before (above) and after (next page) photos show a rehabilitated home for sale through the Rehabarama program.
new construction. The city benefits from having new residents, the homebuilders benefit from the positive publicity and opportunity to showcase their skills, and we all benefit by having saved and restored a beautiful historic home. We expected those outcomes when the project was conceived. However, another equally important result of this event was the way it demonstrated the value of historic preservation to the numerous visitors and the public at large.

Downtown Redevelopment

Along with repopulating our neighborhoods and strengthening our tax base, historic preservation is providing a boost to downtown redevelopment in Dayton. We are experiencing a boom in downtown loft housing, led by visionary developers with an interest in historic preservation. The Cannery, a mixed-use project occupying most of a city block, will offer 156 luxury loft apartments and upscale retail space. This $21 million project, funded by a consortium including the city of Dayton, has generated much sustained interest throughout the region, because the Webster Station Development Group houses a popular farmers market in a historic warehouse at the site. As thousands visit the market to buy fresh produce and other products, they keep up with progress on construction. As a result, many of the lofts are pre-leased, and many of the retail spaces are already occupied.

The Cannery project is just one anchor for the revitalization of an economically depressed historic warehouse district on the east side of downtown Dayton. Another is our new minor league baseball stadium, built on time and on budget. This stadium was deliberately sited in the midst of other buildings, not isolated in a sea of parking. As visitors from all over the region come to our sold-out games, they park a block or two away and stroll through the area. Amenities are being located in the area to serve the customers, and the entire district is being developed. The stadium was carefully scaled to fit in with the surrounding architecture, and features a wrought-iron fence along the sidewalk so that passersby can pause and watch the game. The stadium continues the pedestrian scale so critical to a vibrant street life.

Other historic preservation-related projects are numerous in Dayton. The creative use of many tools of the historic preservation movement has contributed enormously to the renaissance we are seeing in Dayton today.

Citizen Involvement Central to Preservation in Eugene

Eugene, Ore., has been a university town since 1872, when we were selected as the home city for Oregon’s first state university, now the University of Oregon. Our citizens have always been progressive in their inclinations, with strong commitments to education, parks, recreation, quality schools, disabled accessibility, bike paths, and maintaining our riparian connection to the Willamette River. Our Emerald City nickname came about in 1960 because of our verdant hills and tree-lined streets.

Like other Oregon communities, our population numbers exploded following World War II when suburban growth spread in all directions from the core of what had been a small provincial city. The post-war era saw our population expand from 21,000 in 1940 to 50,977 by 1960. Today our citizens total nearly 140,000, with continued expansion at five percent growth per year. Eugene was recently named one of the best five retirement cities in the United States by Money magazine, which gave us high marks for quality of life and proximity to spectacular natural amenities such as the Pacific coast and Cascade mountains.

The City’s Commitment to Preservation

In 1975 Eugene established its first Historic Review Board. Twenty-six years later, Eugene has matured into a city that cares about its history, and its future. Our Historic Preservation Program is housed in the Planning & Development Department, where the Historical Review Board stands as a subcommittee of the Eugene Planning Commission. Planning Commissioner Adell McMillan has sat on the Historic Review Board for nearly nine years while serving as a key liaison for effective planning and preservation.

“The Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area General Plan’s historic preservation element maintains the objective to: “Encourage preservation and restoration of sites, structures, objects and areas of cultural, historic, or archaeological significance for the enjoyment and knowledge of

Jim Torrey

“Eugene’s volunteers, staff, and citizens support historic preservation because it helps us to understand where we have been, and how we can better plan for the wise use of our resources.”
300, do their work quietly, effectively, and with determination. We are solidly partnered with the University of Oregon’s Historic Preservation Program. Graduate students in the master’s program compete to hold internships in our preservation program, allowing the city to leverage limited funding. We formed a joint partnership with the U. of O. in 1999 to ensure appropriate restoration of the city-owned Shelton McMurphy Johnson House. This 1888 Queen Anne-style house is a museum and public meeting place. It is prominently sited on the south slope of Skinner Butte Park, which dominates the northern view of our downtown.

The Skinner Butte Park was part of Eugene Skinner’s donation of a land claim of 360 acres. The city is named for him. The Skinner family sold the remainder of its land holdings to Dr. Shelton, who constructed the Shelton McMurphy Johnson House.

Eugene’s Parks Department is working to update the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan, and recognizes the unique history of this geological formation of basalt columns. The park is notable as the site of the first basalt quarry, for its two giant hillside letters (a giant “O” for the University of Oregon and a giant “E” for Eugene High School) that date back to 1908, and as the regional camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps. CCC boys worked to establish the trails in the park while constructing basalt retaining walls along the scenic drives. Today the Rotary Club has spearheaded a drive to clean up the summit of the butte where our citizens and visitors can enjoy panoramic views.

The Pacific Northwest Field School, an arm of the university’s Historic Preservation Program, used the Shelton McMurphy Johnson House as their learning laboratory in the summer of 2000. More than 80 students from around the country enrolled in the summer session and worked on window, door, foundation, and iron cresting restoration over the course of six weeks. Additional courses, like paint analysis and restoration carpentry, were taught during the academic year. This is a win-win partnership that allows students hands-on participation in complex restoration technology, utilizing local academics and experts in the profession.

Pioneer cemeteries receive strong support by our citizens. In 1995 the Masonic Cemetery was on the city’s list of threatened properties because of a high level of vandalism and criminal activities. City staff coalesced a citizen’s group to oversee the management of this 10-acre hillside site. Today the Masonic Cemetery Association is raising $60,000 a year that is spent directly for a site manager and for appropriate restoration of the 1914 Hope Abbey mausoleum, the best example of Egyptian Revival architecture in Oregon. Neglect of the site resulted in the establishment of a stupendous collection of native plants. Protecting them is also a high priority for our volunteers. The board has collaborated with the Eugene, Pioneer, and Mulkey Cemeteries to leverage limited funds for site management and grant writing.

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Volunteers and Partners Aid Eugene Landmarks

The success of our local historic preservation program comes from mutually beneficial collaboration and enthusiastic volunteers. Our volunteers, who now number nearly 300, do their work quietly, effectively, and with determination. We are solidly partnered with the University of Oregon’s Historic Preservation Program. Graduate students in the master’s program compete to hold internships in our preservation program, allowing the city to leverage limited funding. We formed a joint partnership with the U. of O. in 1999 to ensure appropriate restoration of the city-owned Shelton McMurphy Johnson House. This 1888 Queen Anne-style house is a museum and public meeting place. It is prominently sited on the south slope of Skinner Butte Park, which dominates the northern view of our downtown.

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Help for Residential Areas and Schools

The South University Neighborhood is a premier historic community, with a classic mix of residential styles spanning from 1898 to 1950. Retired residents of this area have worked for three years to list 593 houses as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places. Their positive work has revived the defunct neighborhood group, which now meets regularly to discuss neighborhood issues and successes. Because of the close proximity of this neighborhood to the University of Oregon, the edges of the area have been prone to conversions for rental use. Historic district designation will allow the city to regulate all new construction in the area for compatibility of scale and detail to the signature architecture in the vicinity. A majority of the district residents believe that design review will help to ensure quality construction and serve to preserve the unique street and alley landscapes that make this area a great place to live.

Our changing demographics have resulted in the 4J School District making tough decisions about school closures in our city. Three
Eugene, Oregon

Schools—Edison, Whiteaker, and Santa Clara, all designed by Theodore Gerow in 1926—were earmarked for closing. Edison is a gathering place for children and parents in the South University Neighborhood, so parents actively participated in closure discussions. Students and volunteers at Edison entered the Historic Preservation Week poster contest sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Their efforts earned second place honors in the national competition and a $1,000 award.

Leveraging Funds to Expand Preservation Activities

The National Trust for Historic Preservation continues to be an important partner in our local program. In 1998 it awarded the Masonic Cemetery a Preservation Services Grant to help cover the cost of hiring consultants to research and write the preservation plan for the cemetery. Numerous reports and studies have been written for the Shelton McMurphy Johnson House, but none for the restoration of the landscape. The National Trust awarded the city a Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation grant to hire a consultant to analyze this hillsides heritage landscape that has a direct visual connection with our 1908 Richardsonian train station. In both instances, the National Trust has provided Eugene with dollars that are leveraging a significant contribution by my staff and by local experts working as volunteers. This landscape study will allow us to plan for the wise use of the land and determine how to add and place improvements such as lighting, outbuildings, and parking, as well as how to reestablish the historic connection from Skinner Butte to downtown Eugene.

Volunteers and staff continue to look for ways to leverage limited funds. Recently the city of Eugene received a seed grant from the Oregon Heritage Commission to complete research to implement a heritage plaque program and walking tour in our downtown.

With the recent news that the General Services Administration (GSA) will build a new federal courthouse in Eugene, we have seen the need to document our civic history as a county seat, and as a federal destination for southern Oregon. The city and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, another critical partner, are working with the General Services Administration to resolve Section 106 concerns regarding the Eugene Fruit Growers Association Cannery, where many Eugenians worked during the summer and fall. The cannery, which is closing, will be demolished to make way for the new federal courthouse. We intend to create a video of the final year of cannery operations.

Our cultural resource surveys are well advanced, informing us of where our significant historic areas are located. We have applied for a grant from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office this year so that the city might develop a context statement for Modern Architecture in Eugene, Oregon 1935-1970. This project would allow us to prepare for preservation of the recent past in the first quarter of the 21st century.

Eugene’s volunteers, staff, and citizens support historic preservation because it helps us to understand where we have been, and how we can better plan for the wise use of our resources. Historic preservation makes a difference in Eugene, and to me.

Jim Torrey is mayor of Eugene, Oregon.

Park City: Preservation Efforts of “Olympic” Proportions

Architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable once said, “There is no art as impermanent as architecture.” And I know of no other place in the United States where architectural impermanence is more nurtured by urban developmental pressure than in Park City. Development is inherent to every city’s history, but few cities have endured such a tradition of fluctuating development, prosperity, and adversity as Park City. And now, during what seems to be Park City’s “golden age,” as host for several venues for the 2002 Olympic winter games, the question has been asked: How has preservation made a difference in our community?

Silver Boom and Bust

Park City is located approximately 35 miles southeast of Salt Lake City, Utah, in a narrow V-shaped canyon of Wasatch Mountains. In 1872 the discovery of silver put Park City on the map. By 1884, when the town was incorporated, the potential for striking it rich attracted thousands of people from diverse backgrounds. As a result, Park City’s population swelled quickly from approximately 100 people in 1870 to more than 1,500 in just a few years. And with growth and economic stability came architectural development.

The mining frenzy that spurred this rapid influx of people is characterized in Park City’s historic residential architecture. Houses were typically small and were constructed quickly with minimal investment of time and money. Commercial architecture was built and regarded somewhat differently. Although Park City’s Main Street is mostly made up of small, frame, folk-vernacular structures, several large, more ornate, stone-and-brick Victorian-style commercial buildings were erected.

But silver mining and its subsequent development came with a price—serious environmental damage. At the height of the mining boom period in Park City, the population within the narrow canyon was more than 5,000. Needless to say, the town experienced health risks at the turn of the century because of the size of...
its population. Additionally, the surrounding mines and lumber mills spewing smoke and tailings over the land and into nearby waterways didn’t help the situation.

When most of the mines closed at the end of the 1940s, Park City’s coffers were empty. The city’s population dropped by 500 each year until there were fewer than 1,000 people left. Buildings suffered demolition by neglect, businesses were abandoned, and many basic services were no longer available. However, the lack of activity enabled the area’s natural environment to recuperate, including the re-introduction of trees that now dot the town.

Pressures from the Recreation Industry

In 1961 a giant year-round vacation and recreation complex was planned for the area, to rejuvenate the town’s economy by promoting the tourist and recreational potential that skiers had enjoyed since the early 1930s. Park City was now faced with new developmental pressures, as ski runs/lifts, hotels, and lodges were constructed around town. Although some new shops were incorporated into a few of the abandoned downtown buildings, unfortunately most historic buildings were razed to make room for newer ones.

Because of this, many long-time residents rallied together to save these buildings. They believed that one of the most important factors that separates Park City from the hundreds of other ski-resort towns in the United States is the identity of its mining heritage as represented by the lingering historic architecture peppered throughout town. In 1981 the city council created the Historic District Commission (HDC) whose principal purpose is to identify, preserve, protect, and encourage the continued use of buildings, structures, and sites in Park City having historical significance.

Unfortunately, most owners of historic homes reside out-of-state and regard their miners’ shacks as nothing more than a tax-consuming headache. To most real estate developers, these old houses serve as a deteriorating obstacle between them and the valuable land on which they sit. Their disinterest usually stems from two factors. First, restoring a historic house is both time consuming and costly, and it is easier for owners to maintain their homes during the summer and rent them to skiers during the winter than to invest in the substantial repair of the property. Second, why spend money on improving a structure when the property may be worth twice as much after its demolition? This is an idea that is sometimes reinforced by insensitive real estate developers and land speculators who market Old Town historic properties, spurred on by the pending Olympic games. To mitigate this situation, it is the responsibility of the Park City Planning staff and of local preservation groups to educate the public continually on the benefits of historic preservation.

As if convincing the out-of-state homeowners and local realtors isn’t hard enough, persuading the chief building official not to condemn these historic homes is yet another ongoing challenge for the city. Because the majority of these houses were constructed without an internal structural system or foundation, contractors were faced with having to dissemble the entire house in order to erect a load-bearing frame construction. This action can not only double the cost of labor during rehabilitation, but also places the historic building in an extremely vulnerable situation.

Preservation Grants and Other Help

But regardless of the perception or condition of these houses, they are the most tangible link to our past. Being that Park City has the largest, best preserved collection of mining-era residential buildings in Utah, it is imperative that these historic houses are saved. Hence, the city council applied for federally sponsored redevelopment funding (known as RDA monies) to create an annual matching grant program offered to owners of historic properties in town. The grants, administered by the Historic District Commission (HDC), are intended for general repairs necessary for ensuring the longevity of the historic property. Such work may include the following: all exterior repair work, re-roofing, foundation work, window repair/replacement, exterior repainting, masonry cleaning, structure stabilization, mechanical/electrical and plumbing upgrades. Over the past 13 years, the program has evolved from several applicants receiving a few hundred dollars worth of matching grants to more than 40 different applicants per year receiving between $10,000 to $40,000 each.

This year the HDC offered three types of matching grants as much-needed financial assistance to numerous owners involved in the rehabilitation of their historic buildings: Paint Grant ($7,000 maximum), Regular Grant ($15,000 maximum), and one Landmark Grant ($50,000). In return for receiving a grant, the applicants are required to sign a Grant Agreement, Trust Deed, and Trust Deed Note (the latter two to be recorded temporarily as part of the deed to the property). The purpose of these documents is to ensure that the historic property is not demolished within 10 years from receipt of the grant, nor sold within five years. If the property is sold within this five-year period, a pro-rated portion of the grant monies are
To be repaid to the city as part of the sale of the property. The reason for the first requirement is self-explanatory, but the second is intended to encourage permanent residency, as opposed to aiding those interested in repairing the property only to sell it later for a profit. As an additional incentive to grant applicants, the city waives all building permit fees for work associated with a grant recipient’s application.

Lastly, the cooperative working arrangement between the chief building official and our planning staff helps to reduce confusion and the number of potential mistakes made in the field. This cooperative arrangement, along with the use of the preservation expertise of the planning staff, turn helps to reduce added construction expense by identifying affordable solutions to complex preservation problems while still respecting current building codes.

“Sense of Place” Enhances Park City’s Appeal

Today Park City has firmly established itself as having the “greatest snow on earth,” and by serving as a popular tourist destination by welcoming more than 100,000 people annually to the Park City Art Festival, America’s Opening (an international World Cup ski event), and Robert Redford’s Sundance Film Festival. The area’s mild weather, mature trees, fresh mountain “powder,” and pristine views from 7,000 feet continue to entice visitors the world over. In 2002 Salt Lake City will be the international host of the Olympic winter games and will again attract thousands of people from diverse backgrounds.

In a town where historic structures were once regarded as expendable, people aren’t persuaded to save them based solely on sentimentality. I think Park City’s preservation program is successful because people are discovering that their historic properties increase substantially in value after rehabilitation. Park City also has a highly trained and dedicated staff who are willing to work closely with owners of historic properties to identify and solve the many difficult preservation problems encountered. Additionally, efforts are made continually to educate the community as to why it’s so important to retain some tangible evidence of Park City’s past. Most importantly, Park City continues to offer a strong financial incentive that encourages preservation rather than demolition.

Like other communities throughout the country, Park City has definitely experienced its share of boom and bust. As the world’s attention turns to Park City as an official Olympic site for the pending the 2002 Olympic winter games, Park City will experience another period of prosperity. While developmental pressures increase with the Olympics, the practice of preservation here will certainly get tougher. It is my hope, however, that the positive interest fostered by the games, coupled with Park City’s historic “spirit of place,” will perpetuate a continued interest in the benefits of historic preservation for years to come.

Bradley A. Olch is mayor of Park City, Utah.

Tulsa: Urban Neighborhoods Hold the Key to Smart Growth

“My city, its growth, enterprise, cleanliness, beauty and prosperity is your responsibility. Are you working at it? A city, like a tree, grows as it is trained, straight or crooked. If selfishness dominates it, it will not thrive, and no one will love it. If generous men and women with vision are its cultivators, it will grow and flourish, and the stranger at its gates will enter and ask for a chance to work for it.”

— The Tulsa Plan, 1924

Smart Growth is a buzzword you will hear in any progressive-minded discussion about the future of American cities. In Tulsa, smart growth is also linked to our past.

Founded in 1898, and nestled in a curve of the Arkansas River, Tulsa is a city of vibrant and politically empowered neighborhoods, each rich in its own traditions and architecture. They stand strong around our largest and most important neighborhood—downtown—which gained its shape and form in the boomtown oil days of the 1920s.

It was during that period—in the days of local oil giants like Skelly, Getty, Sinclair, and Phillips—that Tulsa realized that while railroads, airports, highways, and rivers were essential to the establishment of Midwestern cities, a larger vision was necessary to make them truly great. The establishment of our cultural and artistic organizations, the public and private investment in public schools, the purchase of large areas for park lands and museums, and the construction of the Art Deco buildings that make up our present-day skyline—all had their origins in those heady times.

Since then, Tulsans have worked to protect and expand that investment.

Seven Steps to Smart Growth

Today, our Mayor’s Office for Neighborhoods lists more than 300 active neighborhood associations, which staff the front lines in ensuring Tulsa’s sustainable development. The issues facing these neighborhoods mirror the city of Tulsa’s priorities—quality education, affordable housing, the environment,
Tulsa has worked to create a downtown streetscape with mature trees and brick sidewalks emphasizing the human scale in an area dominated by tall buildings.

and a strong economy. Individually, these topics are too difficult for a single neighborhood to address. Together, pulling our neighborhoods together with business leaders, elected officials, and the faith community, we can and have achieved greatness.

Collaboration is a requirement. But so is an agreed upon plan of action. Our approach is basic. It involves seven steps to smart growth.

• Insure that the infrastructure—streets, sidewalks, parks, water, and sewers—is in good working condition. While this may sound simplistic, finding the financial resources to achieve this goal is anything but simple. Fortunately, our taxpayers have responded to this obvious need, approving more than $1 billion in infrastructure improvements over the past 10 years.

• Whenever possible, restore and redevelop—whether the structures have broad historical significance or not. Sometimes this is not possible. In those cases, remove the structures, but only after defining a clear future use.

• Offer incentives to the private and nonprofit sectors to energize development initiatives. If the incentives are accepted, work to ensure that the recipients understand that they need to become a part of the community, reinvesting through their employees.

• Constantly review and, if appropriate, revise local zoning and building regulations to encourage positive redevelopment.

• Work with other government entities, from schools to Indian tribes, to maximize and augment each other’s work and the taxpayer dollars entrusted to us.

• Place a special emphasis on recreational amenities, including parks, running and bike trails, and the urban forest.

• Finally, clean up and/or remove environmental hurdles that demoralize neighborhoods and scare off redevelopment.

All seven of these tasks support preservation of our built and natural environment.

For example, a neighborhood-wide residential street project can increase the chances of historic homes being either restored or maintained. The demolition and environmental clean up of an abandoned midtown foundry can attract a new industrial expansion, and quench the development thirst for more and more greenfields.

These smart growth efforts also have wider implications that elected officials should recognize. If we ignore the core of our community and our established neighborhoods, we invite sprawl. We also seal the fate of our urban schools and the students who someday will be a next generation of elected officials.

Downtown Revitalization Stresses Housing

In Tulsa, our downtown is at a crossroads. We have a collection of architectural wonders that most cities would envy, thanks to a building boom during the Art Deco period. We are also fortunate to have many of the major religious institutions and corporations still based and growing downtown. But to keep those office buildings and churches full, downtown has to become more than an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. destination.

Tulsa has worked to create a downtown streetscape with mature trees and brick sidewalks emphasizing the human scale in an area dominated by tall buildings. Tulsa has also changed one-way streets to their original two-way usage to improve access for commercial establishments and loft housing. We have also used our locally generated sales tax dollars to create public-private partnerships with local developers to build new and redevelop older buildings for downtown housing. These one-time multimillion dollar investments are eventually repaid by developers, and recycled again for additional housing.

One of those investments was the Tribune Building. Constructed in 1928 for the printing and offices of a local daily newspaper, it is now home to 35 apartments. The Tribune Building was listed in the National Register in 1979, making it eligible for federal and 100 percent matching state historic tax credits.

This successful project has led to a second housing development that will mimic the Tribune on land directly to the west. It is being constructed by the same company, without taxpayer assistance.

Not far from the Tribune Building lies Brady Heights, a once fashionable neighborhood that slipped into decline through the 1970s. The historic area has housing styles ranging from folk Victorian and Colonial Revival to Craftsman bungalows and American Foursquares. The elegant homes with leaded glass and bay windows, carriage houses, and broad porches were attractive to new, urban homesteaders and provided exciting restoration possibilities for owners.

To begin with, a criminal element that had relocated to the streets of Brady Heights had to be removed. Prostitution and minor street crimes had become common in the neighborhood. Once these public safety concerns were addressed, then basic infrastructure needs—streets, sidewalks, water and sewer lines, and parking—were met.

Brady Heights was also the first area of Tulsa to adopt historic preservation overlay zoning. Granted by the city council in 1999, this ordinance ensures that all new residential rehabilitation and construction is architecturally appropriate.

This area also offers a perfect setting for “infill” and new partnerships. The neighborhood association, working with the city, local banks, realtors, homebuilders, and architects, has created plans for 10 new homes that are serving as a significant catalyst for further revitalization in Brady Heights.

One more project using federal investment tax credits was the renovation of a grand old “apartment hotel,” the Ambassador. It is a Mission/ Spanish Colonial Revival masonry building constructed in 1929. It is nine stories tall, with a flat roof hidden by a
parapet. This elegant building has been successfully reborn as a thriving hotel with a popular restaurant in its basement/ground floor.

There are other developing smart growth success stories in other older Tulsa neighborhoods, including Kendall-Whitter, Swan Lake, Maple Ridge, and Crutchfield. All have drawn on parts, or all, of the basic seven steps to quality, sustainable redevelopment that has been offered by City Hall.

Urging Neighborhoods to Take the Lead

Make no mistake, though. Our goal is not to always be the lead dog in these exciting redevelopment efforts. Our goal is to build strong, vibrant neighborhood associations who develop the internal leadership and drive to initiate these improvements by themselves, then allow the city to help in their efforts.

When all of our neighborhoods recognize and make use of the city services available—whether that be addressing public safety issues, improving infrastructure, or applying for public or private grants—then we will truly have smart growth, because revitalization efforts will be the result of what the neighborhood residents collectively agree that they want. Once that happens, we will have succeeded in making a great city even greater, and we will have honored those visionary souls who founded and built Tulsa.

M. Susan Savage is mayor of Tulsa, Oklahoma.