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Remembering Louise Crowninshield

Kim Burdick

The Louise duPont Crowninshield Award is the highest award given by the National Trust for excellence in historic preservation. Yet the current generation of preservation professionals knows very little about the woman for whom this award is named. Not only was she actively involved in the creation of the historic preservation movement in Delaware, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., she worked tirelessly on behalf of the National Council of Historic Sites and Buildings as it struggled to establish what later became the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Mrs. Crowninshield's story is more interesting if you have a face to put with a name and a bit of background about her personality. According to John Sweeney, former assistant to the director of Winterthur Museum, who first met Mrs. Crowninshield when he was a very young man in 1953:

“Louise Crowninshield had a great capacity for erasing age differences. She liked to wear big, splashy floral print dresses, and wore the huge hats and furs that went along with the times. Her bearing was truly that of a Grande Dame. People were deferential to her, but not intimidated. People of all ages just loved her. You would never know if you saw her that she had such refined taste. The delicate colors and Sheraton furniture were at odds with her stout figure.”

On the occasion of Mrs. Crowninshield's death in 1958 Walter Muir Whitehall began a memorial booklet which captures her wonderful qualities. In it he writes:

“One had to move fast to keep up with her...Although she was genuinely modest and extremely tactful in everything she did, there was no room in her scheme of things for indecision, useless and protracted discussion, mawkish sentiment, or parochial attachment to the second rate. Although Louise was a conservative and a true preservationist, she saw no reason why things should be done as they always had been if that way were stupid.”

Antiques and Historic House Museums

Louise duPont was born in Delaware in 1877. A member of a large and civic-minded extended family with a strong interest in the arts, she was married to Francis Boardman Crowninshield of Massachusetts for almost 50 years.

Mrs. Crowninshield's life as a preservationist began in earnest in 1924 when she became the owner of Eleutherian Mills, her grandparents' home on the Brandywine River. The house Louise...
loved overlooked the site of the original black powder mills which formed the basis of what has become the world-renowned corporation, DuPont. The house had been lived in by succeeding generations of her family from 1807 to 1890 when it was badly damaged by an explosion in the powder mill.

Louise and her husband restored the house, conferring often, it seems, with her brother and neighbor, Henry Francis duPont, who lived at nearby Winterthur. While Francis Crowninshield set about turning the steep bank below the house into a fashionably-styled “Italian Renaissance Garden,” his wife furnished and rehabilitated the lovely old house. Today Eleutherian Mills, as part of Hagley Museum, remains much as it was in their lifetime, presenting the appearance of a comfortable and inviting place for living and entertaining.

Mrs. Crowninshield’s next adventure in historic preservation was Kenmore, in Fredericksburg, Va., the home of George Washington’s sister. In 1931 she was appointed Delaware regent of the Kenmore Association. Along with her friend, Bertha King Benkard, an authority on early American antiques, she was instrumental in furnishing the house with American antiques.

Mrs. Crowninshield’s work with Kenmore added to her reputation as a person who could get things done and led to her association with Wakefield, George Washington’s birthplace. Charles Peterson says: “Louise was very good to the National Park Service when Wakefield was developed. She contributed all the furniture. That project wasn’t a success, as Wakefield was a kind of fiction, but Louise also furnished the house at the Salem National Maritime Site. She told me one time that the best way to guarantee a house’s survival was to furnish it beautifully because people might not notice the architecture but they would come and you could charge admission fees. Louise always

Mrs. Crowninshield accepts a gift on behalf of the Kenmore Association in Fredericksburg, Va., in the 1930s. Photo courtesy of the Kenmore Association, Inc.
gave more than money. She gave ideas. She was a skilled strategist and knew her people politics and where to put money.”

By 1941 Louise was actively involved with Kenmore, Wakefield, and several other preservation efforts and was becoming interested in Rockefeller’s work in Williamsburg. It is hard to imagine how she juggled so many balls at the same time, but from all reports she did it gracefully. John Sweeney recalls, “Everywhere she went she got interested in everything around her.” He reminds us that Louise and her husband, Francis Boardman Crowninshield, traveled with the seasons. They were in Wilmington primarily in May, June, and October, went to Boston for “the season,” then wintered in Florida.

Many famous individuals of the preservation movement were entertained at Eleutherian Mills. Louise’s relatives, the Lairds and the Sharps, were also involved in historic preservation with projects in New Castle and Odessa, Del., and the family was acquainted with the Rockefellers who were responsible for Williamsburg and the Clarks of Cooperstown. Texas philanthropist Ima Hogg and the well-known collector Electra Webb were Louise’s friends. Her brother H.F. duPont was creating a world-class decorative arts museum. It seemed, indeed, like a “brave new world,” and the synergy must have been very exciting.

Charles Peterson remembers: “I was a guest at her home many times. She had several homes and a big staff... When I was also an officer of the Society of Architectural Historians, she entertained two hundred people for lunch. You would think it would have been catered, but she said she could do it herself with her staff.”

Family was important to Louise. She wrote often to her brother, hosted family parties, and put several young relatives through school. She reportedly once said, “I have never had any children of my own, but I excel in nieces!”

National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings

In 1947 the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings was formed as a membership organization to increase interest in historic preservation throughout the United States. Its bylaws provided that the board of the National Council would organize and incorporate the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States, and take title to historic properties and raise funds for their upkeep.

The council’s first official meeting was held Tuesday October 21, 1947, at the National Gallery of Art. Mrs. Crowninshield attended the meeting and reported on experiences encountered in her restoration work.

Her speech, which laid out her theories of historic preservation, was well-received and contains practical advice still useful to curators of house museums today. She illustrated her points by referring to several historic houses she was involved with in New England, including the Derby House and the Pingrey House.

The newly formed National Council asked Mrs. Crowninshield to join its Committee of Standards and Surveys which had the important job of determining what standards ought to govern the selection of the historic sites and buildings to be supported by the National Council and the proposed National Trust. Several years later Mrs. Crowninshield was in charge of the Ways and Means Committee. The National Council’s membership of 100 member organizations and nearly 500 private individuals was created largely through her efforts. In 1951 the National Council
elevated Mrs. Crowninshield from board member to vice president.

By 1949 the National Council’s lobbying for the creation of a National Trust similar to that of Great Britain was bearing fruit. In October 1949, President Harry Truman signed legislation creating the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

When the executive committee of the National Council met at the National Gallery of Art on November 30, 1949, considerable discussion was held on the matter of trustees for the newly formed National Trust. The list of names proposed by the National Council was indeed formidable, and included Dwight Eisenhower, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, both John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Sr., and others. The committee agreed that among the first to be approached would be Louise Crowninshield.

On October 14, 1949, the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings held its third annual meeting in Williamsburg, Va. Louise was an honored guest speaker. A cousin’s wife, Pamela Copeland, who later became a National Trust board member, recalls this meeting:

“Louise had a wonderful sense of humor. She spoke well and with authority and held the audience in the palm of her hand, even while she looked all around and asked what slides were on the screen, as they were difficult to see from her position.... She had a very nice human relationship with any group she was involved in.”

The first real meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation was held May 1, 1950, at the Octagon House in Washington, D.C., and the outspoken Louise Crowninshield helped set the tone for the new organization’s policy of non-discrimination. The transcript of proceedings shows a thoughtful discussion of the issue, especially regarding the acquisition of certain properties whose owners believed in placing restrictions on who could tour the property. Another committee member, Mr. Davidson, felt strongly that the Trust should have a non-discrimination clause in writing. Louise backed him up completely. Always forthright, she was shocked that anyone would consider discriminating against a visitor to a public building. It became one of the first official policies of the National Trust for Historic Preservation that it would not accept properties under those kind of restrictions.

In 1950, after almost 50 years of marriage, Francis Crowninshield died and John Sweeney tells us:

“They had been planning for their 50th wedding anniversary when he died. Louise used the money she had been setting aside for their anniversary celebration to buy curtains for the Lee Mansion. It was, in a way, a tribute to his memory.”

The National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust and the National Council existed side by side for several years until the dual membership and overlapping functions became too confusing even for the founding members, and in 1952, the boards of both organizations approved a merger of the council into the National Trust. The merger became effective a year later and the National Trust became a membership organization and assumed all other functions of the National Council.

At the meeting when the merger was approved, Mrs. Crowninshield was asked to become the last president of the National Council. Louise declined, saying, “I came in just to help in a humble way and really, I have too many other things besides. I don’t mind doing the committees, but I think that is enough.”
After further urging, she added, “I don’t think it is suitable; I am old-fashioned. I think a committee position should be held by a man.”

Despite her demurrals, Mrs. Crowninshield was elected by acclamation. And so, Louise Crowninshield became president of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, as well as a prominent member of the Board of Trustees of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Much of the meeting was taken up with a protracted discussion of what the name of the merged organization would be. Louise, always forthright and practical, said:

“I don’t think there is one person in ten million, if we had that many subscribers—unfortunately we don’t—who cares what they belong to as long as it has some simplified name. They say, ‘That thing with the impossible name! I can’t ever remember what it is!’ I don’t think they care...The people who belong, the ones I have seen, and I have seen and talked with a great many of them, will not care and do not care in the least how we are organized. They care about our objects [sic].”

In November of that year, Mrs. Crowninshield presided over the sixth annual meeting of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings. The merger of the two organizations was voted upon and unanimously carried.

The first board of trustees meeting of the National Trust was held in the boardroom, 712 Jackson Place N.W., Washington, D.C., with Mr. David Finley, chairman, Board of Trustees, presiding.

Among the many suggestions Louise Crowninshield made at that meeting was that each board member should carry a little pad of tear-out membership forms with the National Trust logo and a slogan saying, “This is a national requirement—Everybody
must help the Trust.” Another suggestion she made was that the Trust’s board go on record as trying to get “either a directive from the President or a bill passed through Congress putting the State Rooms of the White House under the jurisdiction of the Commission of Fine Arts or a committee appointed by them and removing it from the jurisdiction of the President or the occupants of the White House.”

In October 1956 the merger and changing of the guards was complete. By then, Mrs. Crowninshield was ill with cancer, and it was evident to those who knew her that Louise was not in good health. In 1957 the 11th annual meeting of the National Trust was deliberately held in Swampscott, Mass., near her home in Marblehead, partly because her long-term partners in preservation wished to honor Louise for her lifelong commitment and many contributions to historic preservation. Unwilling to miss the fun and no doubt enjoying every minute of the event, Mrs. Crowninshield insisted on hosting all 400 conference attendees at a luncheon at her home. She died a year later.

Her friend and colleague David Finley later wrote: “...the members wished to express their admiration of Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield, Vice Chairman of the National Trust, who had filled such an important role in the preservation movement in New England and throughout this country. It was her last appearance at a Trust meeting.”

“It is in her memory that the trustees of the National Trust for Historic Preservation established the Louise duPont Crowninshield Award for distinguished achievement in the field of historic preservation. A special endowment fund was provided by Mrs. Crowninshield’s friends, the income to be used to finance the program.”

Louise Crowninshield was larger than life in many ways. She had a real career as a historic preservationist in a day when women of her class did not “work.” She worked faithfully on numerous preservation projects without pay throughout her life, and far beyond the point when most salaried individuals would have retired, to ensure a legacy for all of us.

Kim Burdick has been a Delaware member of the Board of Advisors to the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1991. She was the founder of the Delaware Folklike Project and a founding board member of Preservation Delaware. She was recently awarded a joint Hagley/Winterthur Fellowship in Arts & Industry to continue her research on Louise duPont Crowninshield.

NOTE

1 The building and property remained the property of the DuPont Company until the powder yards were closed in 1921. When the house was offered for sale, Henry Algernon duPont purchased the house for his daughter, Louise Crowninshield. For a beautifully illustrated glimpse of Eleutherian Mills see Southern Accents, May-June 1987, vol. 10, issue 3. Pages 128-137. Written by Maureen Quimby, photography by Van Jones Martin.

SOURCES

Interviews by the author:
Pamela Copeland, Dec. 6, 1999
Charles Peterson, Nov. 29, 1999
John Sweeney, June 14, 1999

Publications:

Materials from National Trust Archives, McKeldon Library, University of Maryland, including:
Hosmer Papers.
Transcript of proceeding, National Trust of Historic Preservation in the United States, May 1, 1950.
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The French Have a Word for It

Anthony Veerkamp

A few weeks ago, stuck in the pages of a Pottery Barn catalog (no matter where I move, I can always count on the Boston University Alumni Association and Pottery Barn to track me down) was a poignant plea for help. The League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) was reaching out to its members to resolve a long-standing debate: Would it be “theatre” or “theater”?

To most of us in the trenches fighting to preserve what we can, it might at first seem a singularly insignificant question. One might reasonably assert that while we all sit around playing parlor games concerning the proper pairing of a consonant and a vowel, we could be losing yet another rural opera house, downtown movie palace, or suburban drive-in. Our job as preservationists is to fight to save tangible manifestations of our past, not argue about linguistic niceties. Right?

Perhaps. Certainly my initial reaction to the LHAT missive was to relegate it to the blue plastic recycling box under my desk. (I have a sickening suspicion that nothing in my “recycling box” actually gets recycled, but my participation in this charade has allowed me to rescue countless documents that turned out to be more important that they seemed on first reading.) And so it was in this case. A short time after the impertinent request had joined a “How to Manage Your Time Effectively” seminar announcement (lesson one: Don’t open any mail that includes “or current resident” in the mailing label), I had a sudden flash from the memory banks. There was Mr. Gutherie, my long suffering high school English teacher, gravely intoning: “language matters.”

While Mr. Gutherie may have exhibited dubious wisdom in trying to teach Joyce’s Ulysses to a bunch of seventeen-year-olds, he did manage to instill respect for the English language and a distaste bordering on prudishness for the worst abuses of the language. When I expressed a gathering-in-my-skirts shock at the redundancy of an early draft of the National Trust’s new mission statement that included the phrase “revitalizing the livability,” I was really just channeling the ghost of my crabby high school English teacher.
Despite his anglophile, old world order tendencies (no one else in my high school could possibly have gotten away with wearing an ascot), I'm pretty certain where Mr. Gutherie would come down on the theater/theatre question. While both are technically acceptable, “theater” is direct and salt-of-the-earth, while “theatre” is fussy and pretentious. (I shudder to imagine his reaction to those who pronounce the word “thee-ay-ter.” Populist he wasn’t.)

The ghost of Mr. Gutherie led me on a quest. In an “inquiring minds need to know” mood, I shot off an e-mail to the good folks at LHAT to find out the survey results. Terry Demas with the League reported that this was no “you say tomayto and I say tomahto” sort of thing. He got nearly 100 responses, and many included fighting words. It turns out that at least at the LHAT, Britannia rules: At last count, it was a landslide vote for “theatre.”

While the success of the LHAT in its mission to preserve old theaters probably won’t hinge on spelling, there is no denying that underlying the theater/theatre question is a serious issue. Language has an extraordinary power to shape the way we think. The words we choose inevitably send messages about who we are and what we believe. Part and parcel of our preservation efforts is our struggle as a movement to define and articulate exactly what we’re fighting for. In the age of the sound bite, we disregard the importance of the language of preservation at our own peril.

We have reason to be concerned. It takes only a quick scan of the popular press to realize that they get terms like National Register and National Historic Landmark right maybe 50 percent of the time. If you insist upon their actually getting the meaning right, the success rate drops significantly. The National Trust suffers the same fate. Even when we’re not confused with the National Register our name is still likely to be garbled, and that’s not including the intentional hysterical/historical lampoons. The editor of this journal reports that she once received correspondence addressed to the “National Trust for Stork Preservation.” Just yesterday I read a New York Times editorial that got the name right in the first paragraph, only to refer to “the Historic Trust” two paragraphs later.

Certainly, we have no shortage of words at our disposal. As the historic preser-
The vocabulary movement has matured, we have developed our own lexicon. The Dictionary of Building Preservation (Wiley) includes more than 10,000 terms, but I’ve noticed plenty of omissions (where’s “Googie”?!). Many of our words have developed organically and reflect the ease with which the English language accommodates change. The term “facadism” has come into widespread usage to disparage some of the more egregious examples of gut rehabs (though I’m still partial to “facadomy”). A few years ago, when the National Trust was staring down the barrel of losing its federal appropriation and eager to “think outside the box,” Utah Advisor Tina Lewis would regularly regale fellow advisors with the latest “Washington word.” What’s fascinating is how quickly her Washington words became our words. Despite the unifying force of the National Trust, the National Park Service (NPS), and other national players, preservationists even have room for regional disparities—I’m certain that the pronunciation of “SHPO” is the future fodder for a linguistics thesis.

The pronunciation of “SHPO” is not the only linguistic inconsistency among preservationists. For example, is it “an history book” or “a history book”? Even the most ardent grammarians have a hard time making a rule that sticks—it all depends on how you pronounce the “h.” If you heavily aspirate the “h” sound, you should probably go with “a.” Even so, it’s not so cut-and-dried: it makes sense to speak of “a history book on an historical subject.” Why? With the shift of stress from history to historical goes a softening of the “h” sound. (No copy editor would let you get away with that in writing, though.)

Then there’s the ever popular “historic” versus “historical” debate. No room for a laissez-faire attitude here. The two words have distinct uses, and are not interchangeable. The site of a historic battle (important in history) might be designated a historical park (relating to history). (Though why it is “historic preservation” I doubt that even Mr. Gutherie could explain. He would probably call it an accepted collocation and deftly change the subject.) Likewise, there’s no grammatical rule as to whether something should be listed “in” or “on” the National Register. That doesn’t mean you’re free to decide, though. The NPS has laid down the law here (I just can never remember what the law is).

While the success of the LHAT in its mission to preserve old theaters probably won’t hinge on spelling, there is no denying that underlying the theater/theatre question is a serious issue.

Some of our vocabulary is enshrined in our sacred scriptures, including the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the National Historic Preservation Act. (Never mind that to most people the Secretary’s Standards sounds like a style manual for temps.) Federal laws and regulations are a particularly fertile source of acronyms, from cheerful sounding ISTEA (now superceded by TEA-21) and FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact, for the uninitiated) to the malicious-sounding RFRA (“Religious Freedom Restoration Act”). And then there’s that group in Louisiana. No one can deny that the National Cen-
ter for Preservation Technology and Training is a mouthful, but is NCPTT really an improvement?

Despite the richness of our professional patois, we usually fall back on a few old workhorses. The problem is, none of them really hits the nail on the head. “Historic resource” makes most people’s eyes slam shut even if they know what it means. “Cultural resource,” on the other hand, is as likely to conjure up Monteverdi as Monticello, much less the corner grocery. Likewise, “cultural landscape” may mean something to the anointed, but it’s not a term that has entered the popular lexicon.

Other countries employ “patrimony” with reasonable success, but to an American ear, it sounds gender-biased and elitist. Some have found a misogynist core in the word “history,” for that matter. The neologism “herstory” would be a great feminist touché, were it not based on an ignorance of etymology. (Still, as the Washington, D.C., civil servant who made the mistake of using the word “niggardly” in public now knows, etymology—schmetemology. If it sounds nasty, best avoid it.) Our neighbors to the north have settled upon “heritage,” and employ it in any number of combinations. (I haven’t heard of any rear-guard “hisirtage” movement, but give it time). Here in the U.S., “heritage” may be fatally co-opted. We can probably thank the Heritage Foundation for this. Talk about preserving your heritage, and many people will conjure up the Confederate Stars and Bars flying over the South Carolina Capitol.

This is by no means the only case where we’ve been lexically trumped. Preservationists have long contended that our movement is fundamentally about sensible stewardship of resources. Consider the bitter irony, then, of the zealots who seek to open up public lands to the worst sort of private exploitation calling themselves the “wise use” movement.

Lately there’s been a lot of talk about preservation of the “recent past”—an admirably vague term that avoids nasty demarcation battles.

Their co-conspirators, the property rights folks, have also out-maneuvered us on the language front. Preservationists have tried valiantly to avoid being portrayed as anti-property rights. Yet we have resorted to legalese. First, we call the basis of the right of government to regulate the treatment of historic properties “police power” (ouch). We then insist on framing our right to exercise police power as a “takings” issue. You can almost hear the chorus of “huh?”s across the land.

Imitation, the saying goes, is the highest form of flattery. But perhaps the same cannot be said when the word with which you identify yourself becomes shorthand for all that is wrong with the world. For some reason I’ve never quite fathomed, those who want to really lay into our green colleagues brand them “preservationists.” The Western Caucus of the U.S. Congress (“Western” should by rights be in quotes, since their membership extends to such states of dubious western pedigree as Pennsylvania and Florida) has a policy position of “Conservation, Not Preservation.” The Western Caucus “believes that renewable natural resources are not fragile and static, but resilient and dynamic. Management—not
preservation—is the best way to achieve environmental progress.” Go figure. (The Caucus might consider having a word with the Lake Tahoe Sierra Preservation Council, which seems chiefly interested in preserving the right to despoil the environment).

Lately there’s been a lot of talk about preservation of the “recent past”—an admirably vague term that avoids nasty demarcation battles. And for good reason too, because everyone loves a Doggie Diner sign. One of the great tests of the preservation movement will be to successfully tap the passions of a generation who get excited not about Mansard roofs and limestone, but Mansard roofs and plastic. Unfortunately, the populist groundswell of supporters who helped save the Downey McDonalds is unlikely to wave a banner in the name of “commercial archeology.”

The National Park Service made a great philosophical leap forward when it explicitly recognized the importance of places that play a role in a community’s historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices, but pulled a bit of a boner by naming these places “Traditional Cultural Properties.” Traditional, yes, cultural, that too, but “property” is a concept that is antithetical to many of the values that the designation seeks to protect. For better or worse, “TCP” quickly became the shorthand, allowing us to pretend that the “P” stands for “place,” a term that carries much less ethnocentric baggage.

The preservation movement’s entry into the land-use-planning debate has bought with it a whole new series of language pitfalls. First off, there’s the “S” word. We think that we all know what “sprawl” is, but it’s as elusive to pin down as pornography. And “quality of life”? Fuggedaboudit.

Still, we’re learning. First of all, we now know it is much better to be for something than against something. The developers insist on giving us sprawl, but we now offer an alternative. It’s not that we’re against growth, it’s that we’re for smart growth! Now you may think that no one could be against smart growth, but think again. Why settle for smart growth when you can be growing smarter? I’m not making this up. That’s the name of an Arizona effort that seems to be all about growing, with very little in the way of smarts. Still, they’ve succeeded in making “smart growth” of questionable pedigree.
What’s a preservationist to do? I’ve been trawling around in search of linguistic manna for the HP community, and I think I have a candidate: terroir. My on-line French-English dictionary offers “soil” as a translation, but the English word doesn’t begin to express the range and subtlety of the French. The word evokes the coming together of all those qualities of a place—geography, geology, climate, culture, history—to create something that is unique and intrinsic.

The American wine press, a crowd that has never been shy about pushing the limits of the language (wines made from lowly Concord grapes are said to taste “foxy”) has found a new religion in terroir. This is in response to the globalization of the wine business, which has seen vineyards corporatized and industrialized to within an inch of their lives. In today’s market-driven world, wine mongers offer you your heart’s desire, as long as your heart yearns for Chardonnay or Merlot. It seems that yanking out all those old vines that were unique to a country, or even a valley, may not have been such a good idea after all. People are drowning in a vat of generic plonk, and are increasingly desperate not for the ubiquitous, but for the unique.

Of course, this is what preservationists have been arguing all along. But maybe we in turn can learn from the integrated, holistic approach advocated by those who make vin du terroir. By thinking of a place in terms of its terroir, it quickly becomes apparent that the much-ballyhooed conflict between man and nature (between cultural and natural resource management, in preservation-speak) is not a zero-sum game. Places are special and worth preserving for a whole range of qualities. If preservationists, planners, and environmentalists all work together to preserve the local terroir, the (non-contributing) walls we’ve built between our disciplines might come tumbling down. The Terroir Trust, anyone?

Maybe not. Those French R’s are hell to pronounce, and I’m not sure that French is the key to the minds and hearts of the American people. Maybe what we need to adopt from French farmers isn’t a word, but their back-to-basics approach that stresses the local over the global, the unique over the generic. Maybe the words of our own founding fathers and mothers still serve us well:

“The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.”

—National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470 et seq.) Section 1(b) (2).

I couldn’t have said it better myself.

Anthony Veerkamp is a program associate in the National Trust Western Office.
Sprawl and smart growth are on the minds of many Americans. A February 1999 survey released by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism found that in the four cities surveyed—Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Tampa—a cluster of issues including sprawl, unfettered growth, and traffic congestion surfaced as an overwhelming public concern, outstripping or equaling traditional issues such as crime, the economy, and education. Polls taken in other parts of the country show that sprawl and smart growth are becoming major public concerns as well.

But what do the issues of sprawl and smart growth have to do with historic preservation? And how can preservationists take advantage of the many surveys that address “sprawl issues”? In the words of Don Rypkema, of the Real Estate Services Group in Washington D.C., “Historic preservation is smart growth. We cannot say we are having smart growth—regardless of how well it is physically planned—if at the same time we are abandoning existing assets.”

At the same time, sprawl threatens historic resources. Such development drains the economic vitality from older cities and towns, where most historic buildings are concentrated. This makes it hard for property owners to maintain and continue using historic buildings. As an auto-dependent form of development in the extreme, sprawl requires a vast infrastructure for cars that threatens local community character.

The relationship between sprawl and historic preservation issues can be seen in many surveys. For example, a Metropolitan Quality of Life survey conducted in the Phoenix area in 1999 found that 88 percent of respondents believe that revitalizing older communities is smart growth. And a 1999 Virginia survey by Bannon Research, a Washington, D.C., polling firm, revealed that more than half (56 percent) of the voters believe that “Virginia’s heritage and quality of life have become a casualty to homogenized growth that destroys both our rural landscape and the urban core.”
Visual preference surveys have found that most Americans react negatively to sprawl. Photo by Constance E. Beaumont.

Clearly, the time is right for preservationists to participate in the debate over these issues and demonstrate why preservation is an alternative to sprawl. “We need to bring the preservation field up to speed with sprawl and smart growth,” says Greg Paxton, executive director of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. “These are hot topics. Preservationists must demonstrate that their goals are consistent with those of smart growth advocates. Preservation is a realistic alternative to uninterrupted sprawl.”

Since historic preservation offers alternatives to sprawl, the results from many public opinion surveys can be used strategically by preservation advocates to craft messages for their organization, advance preservation policies with elected officials, and attract media attention to the benefits of preservation. In addition to utilizing existing survey results, preservation organizations can commission their own surveys, or do this in partnership with other groups.

Survey Findings

Surveys on the environment have been conducted for many years, but until the mid-1990s these surveys did not begin to feature public concerns about a new issue: land use problems. According to Kate Stewart of Belden Russonello & Stewart, a Washington, D.C.,-based research and communications firm, “This was an issue coming out in these surveys that we had not seen before.”

Findings from surveys give policy makers, the media, and smart growth advocates an overview of public opinion on growth issues. One downside of public opinion research is that it usually only captures a mere snapshot. Some organizations, however, conduct annual surveys that pose the same questions to the same sample size on a regular basis, a technique that enables an organization to track public opinion trends on a particular
issue over long periods. Most surveys have found that:

- Most Americans share such values as a desire for a clean environment, safe neighborhoods, and the preservation of natural and historic resources often threatened by sprawl.

- Most Americans want to live in a place with a sense of community.

- Most Americans don’t like congested roads and long commute times to work because of poorly planned development.

- Most Americans are dissatisfied with endless miles of commercial development that cause unnecessary traffic congestion.

- Most Americans want to live in a single-family, detached house (though not necessarily on a large lot).

- Most Americans usually react negatively to sprawl.

- Most Americans don’t like the degradation of the natural environment but are not sure how this issue relates to concerns about sprawl.

- Most Americans overwhelmingly support policies that contain sprawl such as the protection of greenfields, public purchases of open space, urban growth boundaries, and financial incentives for the rehabilitation of downtowns and neighborhoods.

Reading and Understanding Survey Findings

Surveys are done for public release or for internal use by an organization for strategic planning purposes. If survey results are available to the public, they may be used by other organizations; however, it is critical that the user groups know the context of the survey.

The only surveys that should be considered valid are “scientific” surveys. The major difference between a “scientific” and an “unscientific” survey lies in who picks the respondents. In a scientific survey, the pollster identifies and seeks out the people to be interviewed to have a representative sample of the groups whose views are being represented. But in an unscientific survey, respondents usually volunteer their opinions. An “unscientific” pseudo-survey includes 900-number call-in surveys, man-on-the-street surveys, most Internet surveys, and shopping mall surveys. These surveys are often useful, but they are not scientifically accurate.

One should ask several questions when evaluating the results of public opinion surveys. Answers to these questions clarify not only the context for the survey and survey outcomes but also the scientific rigor used for conducting the survey. Surveys are subject to different interpretations by different people.

“The most important thing when reading a poll is to make sure you look carefully at the question wording,” says Garth Taylor, executive director of the Metro Chicago Information Center, a nonprofit research firm specializing in data collection projects that support nonprofit organizations in their advocacy work. “Don’t take at face value the interpretation of the questions in the poll,” warns Taylor.

Survey Findings in Action

Surveys by organizations at the local, state, and national level on sprawl and smart growth can be used by preservationists in many ways, as the following cases show.

Maine’s Survey Targets the Housing Market

In 1999 the Maine State Planning Office completed two market-based surveys of 600 recent homeowners and 180 households actively planning to buy a new home. The survey results painted a picture of new and potential homeowners moving out of compact
villages perceived as deteriorating around the edges and into once-pristine rural lands. However, when a statistical technique called cluster analysis, which groups survey respondents according to their attitudes and values, was used, the picture on attitudes about sprawl changed.

“What we found were four distinct clusters based on attitudes regarding the need to be close to nature, need for proximity to services, need for privacy, and desire for children-oriented neighborhoods,” says Elizabeth Della Valle, senior planner for the State of Maine.

The cluster analysis indicated that 43 percent of recent homebuyers who had moved out of established towns and into new developments on the outskirts of town are seeking places that the Maine Planning Office calls “Great American Neighborhoods.” Such neighborhoods are defined as walkable, well landscaped, and close to civic institutions. They are akin to many historic neighborhoods if not such neighborhoods themselves. Although historic and older neighborhoods frayed around the edges are seen as undesirable places to live, those that are economically healthy and not frayed at the edges are popular places to live.

Based on these responses, the Maine Planning Office is now preparing to launch an outreach and education campaign around the elements of the “Great American Neighborhood.” “The campaign will promote alternatives to sprawl,” says Della Valle. The campaign will include an assortment of products to help local communities, home builders, and potential homebuyers incorporate smart growth principles into new and existing communities. Finally, Della Valle hopes to expand on earlier research into homebuyers’ decisions, and undertake a survey of commercial and industrial interests to evaluate the motivations for their decisions to relocate.

Colorado Survey Finds Strong Support for Statewide Smart Growth Policies

Public opinion surveys can demonstrate overwhelming support for public policies that may not now be supported by elected officials. These results provide strong ammunition for citizen groups advocating certain policies. In Colorado, for example, the University of Colorado’s Norwest Public Opinion Research Program recently released a statewide poll on growth. Eight of ten Coloradans expressed concerns about growth, with 73 percent saying that the region of the state in which they live is growing too fast. The poll revealed that more than 72 percent of respondents supported legislation to require cities and counties to designate urban growth boundaries to contain development. The release of the poll coincided with the Colorado legislature’s consideration of smart growth legislation.

“The survey broke the myth that these growth management proposals were only supported by certain people living in certain places,” says Rich McClintock, executive director of the Colorado Public Interest Research Group (COPIRG). Following the survey’s release, headlines in the Denver Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post read “Coloradans Want to Fight Sprawl” and “Legislature at Odds with Public on Growth.” And a February 12, 2000, editorial published in the Denver Post noted the key word in the survey questions was “require” local governments to develop and implement comprehensive land use plans. Coloradans were ready and willing to stand up for smart growth legislation, for “the
survey sent a clear message to our legislature that many people from many backgrounds wanted change,” says McClintock.

Vermont’s Survey Used in Many Ways

In January 1999, the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, a nonprofit statewide organization founded in 1998 to curb sprawl, released a poll of more than 2,300 Vermonters on the subject of community values and sprawl. The poll findings, used as a baseline indicator for Vermonters’ awareness on sprawl, helped the organization design its message, and its education and outreach efforts. In addition, findings have been used in testimony before the state legislature and in individual conversations with state officials. “We really used the results of the poll to get the word out about the sprawl issue in Vermont,” says Elizabeth Humstone, associate director of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl. Humstone says that the poll definitely added to the reputation of the Forum, noting that “we used the poll to launch our public relations campaign with the media. We received excellent statewide coverage by the print, TV, and radio media with the release of it.”

Paul Bruhn, executive director of the Preservation Trust of Vermont, emphasizes the importance of using the surveys to facilitate communication and understanding among the many groups fighting sprawl. “You can’t tackle this problem on your own. The Preservation Trust is in this issue along with everyone else,” says Bruhn. Bruhn stresses the importance of taking a different approach to thinking about historic preservation: “You need to think outside the box,” says Bruhn. “We have broadened our ideas to think beyond protecting an individual building or a house to protecting the character of a community.”
Benefit of Public Opinion Surveys

One of the greatest benefits of public opinion surveys is that they give activists a good reality check. “There is usually a big gap between mass opinion and elite opinion, and surveys can show this gap,” says Scott Wolf, executive director of Grow Smart Rhode Island. Getting a handle on the actual attitudes of the public can better enable an organization to craft its communications message to appeal to the less-than-fervent supporters.

The growing number of surveys on land use issues has provided smart growth advocates with a stronger vocabulary to use when discussing sprawl issues with people who are not intimately involved. These surveys can also give preservationists a better understanding of how historic preservation provides an alternative to sprawl.

Because sprawl is an emerging policy issue—unlike health care, Social Security, or other issues about which people have long-established opinions—now is an opportune time to help shape public opinion. Because this issue calls for multi-layered public policies it is imperative that smart growth advocates clearly explain why sprawl must be controlled and how historic preservation can help.

Commissioning a Survey

Public opinion surveys are usually conducted by an outside survey research firm responsible for designing the research methodology and questions, conducting interviews, and writing the report. Although such firms are responsible for overseeing the survey, the organization commissioning the survey must work closely with the firm. Pollsters are not magicians. If the objectives of the client are not clear, they will not be reflected in the survey results and analysis. “Garbage in, garbage out,” says Scott Wolf of Grow Smart Rhode Island. “If you don’t know why you are doing the survey or what you are using the results for, then it is a waste of time.”

Surveys are costly and time consuming. “Surveys are no light undertaking. You really need to consider the financial cost and the additional staff time,” notes Barbara Lawrence, executive director of New Jersey’s Future. “You need to know what you are going to do with the information after the survey is completed.”

The research firm should spend a considerable amount of time with the organization commissioning the poll to understand what issues are important to the organization and what it wants to address. Research firms will sometimes conduct focus groups before drafting the questions. The focus groups help pollsters identify and understand the range of opinions on an issue. Pollsters then write questions based on the words that people use in the focus groups and the concepts the experts want to convey. “Our goal is to craft a question that will get the concept across but use language that people will be able to understand,” says Kate Stewart. After the survey is complete, the research firm will prepare and analyze the data and write a narrative summary explaining the data in non-technical language. Since results are subject to interpretation, it is important
that the organization commissioning the survey work to develop a positive message.

Surveys can cost anywhere between $5,000 to $100,000 depending on the number of questions, question length and complexity, size of population being interviewed, and type of statistical analysis to be done afterward. Because surveys may not be financially feasible for all organizations, less costly alternatives, including conducting focus groups and purchasing questions in someone else's survey, should be considered.

Focus groups are generally used in three ways: to get a better sense of the range of opinions on an issue prior to a survey; to further test the ideas and messages that came from the survey; and on their own. The last option can be useful for an organization with a limited budget. “It can be very helpful if a small organization has one or two messages that it would like to test,” says Stewart. Focus groups enable an organization to develop a communications message and test it by asking members of the focus group to respond to it.

An alternative to focus group research is purchasing a few questions that will be included in a larger survey. The price for purchasing a question depends on the depth of the survey and the type of analysis provided by the research firm. Purchasing question(s) can be helpful if the organization has already done other research and wants to test a few ideas.

Conclusion

The debate over smart growth and sprawl is relatively new to Americans. Surveys can provide some insight into Americans’ opinions on these issues, but they cannot be thought of as the “be-all-and-end-all” in uncovering public opinion. Some people feel that surveys are overrated and overused. According to David Cieslewicz, director of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, “Calling some guy at home during dinner with his children and hassling him about something is not necessarily going to give you a good picture of this guy’s opinion on land use issues.” Furthermore, land use policies can be difficult to grasp quickly, so public opinion surveys may not reflect the public’s understanding of the issue.

Despite these drawbacks, surveys can provide plenty of useful information. For example, Preservation Pennsylvania made good use of a statewide environmental survey conducted by Mansfield University in 1999 showing that 83 percent of respondents support more state spending on historic resources. Caroline Boyce, the group’s former executive director, relates, “The survey gave us key nuggets that we could use to demonstrate that historic preservation plays a very important part in efforts to revitalize communities and protect open space.”

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Important Questions to Ask about Surveys

Who paid for the survey and why was it done? Knowing who paid for the survey tells you who thought these topics were important enough to spend money finding out what people think. Evaluate the survey to be certain that it accurately reflects public opinion and not just the interest of the organization paying for the survey.

What area (nation, state, region, local) or what group (environmentalists, Republicans, Democrats, homeowners, etc.) were survey respondents chosen from? For example, if the survey respondents were homebuilders who have a financial interest in the construction of new homes, their responses may differ from those of identified environmentalists who favor preserving land.

Who did the survey? If you don’t know who did the survey, you must question the results. Reputable polling firms will provide information you need to know to evaluate the survey. Because reputation is important to a quality firm, a professionally conducted poll will avoid errors.

When was the survey conducted? Events have a dramatic impact on survey results. When reading and evaluating the survey, consider what events occurred around the time when the survey was conducted.

How were survey respondents selected? In scientific surveys the pollster uses a specific method for picking respondents; in unscientific surveys the participants are self-selected.

How many people were interviewed for the survey? The more people interviewed, the smaller the error, all other things being equal. But it is important not to assume that more is always better. Other factors may affect the quality of the survey.

Are the results based on the answers of all the people interviewed? An easy way to misrepresent the results of a poll is to report the answers of only a subgroup.

What questions were asked? The wording of questions can make a major difference in the results.

In what order were the questions asked? Sometimes the order of the questions can affect results. Often the impact is intentional; sometimes it is not. Consider whether the questions that were asked prior to critical question(s) in the poll could sway the results.

How were the interviews conducted? Three main possibilities: in person, by telephone, or by mail. Most surveys are done by telephone, by interviewers working from a central location. Some surveys are conducted by mail. Mail surveys can be good sources of information, but they are time consuming and subject to low response rates.

What about polls on the Internet or World Wide Web? The explosive development of the Internet and World Wide Web has given rise to a huge growth in various types of surveys. Online polls may be good entertainment, but they tell you nothing about public opinion because respondents are self-selected.

What is the sampling error for survey results? Pollsters express the degree of the certainty of results based on a sample as a “confidence level.” This means a sample is likely to be within so many points of the results one would have gotten if an interview were attempted with the entire target population.

What other factors skew survey results? Margin of sampling error and question order and phrasing are some other factors that skew results.

Adapted from 20 Questions a Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results by Sheldon R. Gawiser, Ph.D. and G. Evans Witt.
The American Institute of Architects

Behavior Research Center of Arizona

Beldon Russonello & Stewart, conducted for the Biodiversity Project in partnership with the Nature Conservancy

Campaign for Sensible Growth, a project of the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council
University of Illinois-Chicago, 1999 Survey.

East-West Gateway Coordinating Council,
St. Louis, Missouri
How We See It. 1999.

Maine State Planning Office

The Metropolitan Chicago Information Center

Metropolitan Phoenix

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Wisconsin
Our Vanishing Landscape. January 2000 series on sprawl, includes a survey.

1000 Friends of Minnesota and Decision Resources, Ltd.

National Association of Home Builders

The Norwest Public Opinion Research Program, University of Colorado at Denver

1000 Friends of Oregon

The Pew Center on Civic Journalism

Public Policy Institute of California
Public Policy Institute of California Statewide Surveys. Ongoing.

The Vermont Forum on Sprawl
Results featured in the series Exploring Sprawl. 1999.

Virginia Environmental Endowment and Virginia Commonwealth University
The DO’s and DON’Ts of How Preservationists Should Talk About Sprawl

**DO’s**

- Define sprawl in manageable terms. Explain what is lost due to sprawl (e.g., green space, clean air, and water) and explain how we can fix the problem.
- Personalize—and localize—your message about sprawl’s impacts on people whenever possible. For example, explain how sprawl contributes to traffic congestion, which means less time for one’s family.
- When discussing cities focus on success stories of cities and towns on the rebound.
- Talk about sprawl’s impact on local traffic congestion.
- Discuss the need for public transportation, and other alternatives to driving—e.g., walking when short trips are involved and biking—in terms of giving people choices.
- Include policy solutions that describe benefits—e.g., protecting the environment; revitalizing neighborhoods; preserving green space, trees, and farms; and cleaning up air and water.
- Explain to people how sprawl is taking money out of their pockets.
- Use pictures to illustrate sprawl and its consequences. This is especially critical when discussing land use density issues. The ability of people to visualize good design is essential.
- Appeal to basic values that people have. Stress that there are alternatives to sprawl that provide more convenience, more choice, and a greater sense of community.
- Focus on environmental losses when communicating a national message on sprawl.

**DON’Ts**

- Don’t assume the term “sprawl” is understandable. It needs to be defined in terms of its consequences for people.
- Don’t assume sprawl’s impact on a sense of community is automatically understood. The argument that sprawl destroys a sense of community is more easily understood when the focus is on commercial sprawl.
- Don’t talk about the urban disinvestment problem caused by sprawl in general, national terms. Localize this message.
- Don’t discuss traffic problems caused by sprawl in national terms.
- Don’t discuss public transportation in terms of something people should use. Explain how it benefits everyone, including people who drive, by getting cars off the road.
- Don’t emphasize solutions that imply limiting development as a goal in itself, or that focus on ways to achieve the goal. Emphasize the payoff, not the process of public policy.
- Don’t just focus on general fiscal or other costs to society as a whole.
- Don’t just talk about sprawl. Use pictures to make your points. Do not discuss higher density alternatives to sprawl without illustrating them visually.

*This list of Do’s and Don’ts draws from recommendations provided by Belden Russonello & Stewart and Edward T. McMahon, director of Greenways at The Conservation Fund.*
Urban Revitalization: When Rehab Grows Up

“*Our allegiance is to the future, not the past.*”

This statement, spoken during a heated discussion about the fate of historic downtown Pittsburgh in light of the most recent urban renewal proposal, was not stated by the project developer or by city redevelopment staff. Instead, the chairman of the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission (to accompanying hisses from a packed house of merchants, preservationists, and concerned citizens) made this remark just before a unanimous vote by the commission to approve a $480 million plan to demolish more than 60 historic buildings and displace 125 tenants for an upscale redevelopment project anchored by a multiplex theater.

Was the chairman’s statement wrong? No. But, what was wrong was what didn’t get said, and what many city leaders are eager to say, namely that when it comes to downtown revitalization, a successful city pays allegiance to a future that invests in its past. Richard Moe, president of the National Trust, summed up the decision this way; “Because it would destroy the historic buildings that represent the best hope for the rebirth of downtown, this is one of the most wrongheaded revitalization proposals to appear anywhere in the country in the last 30 years.”

So what is the answer to today’s urban revitalization problem? It’s a comprehensive approach, a plan for the future that addresses mass transit, downtown housing, safety, tax incentives, design controls, public amenities, walkability, livability and, oh yes, historic preservation. More than just an afterthought, historic preservation has served as the impetus for many successful urban revitalization efforts under way today. As case studies from Denver, Dallas, Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh—yes, Pittsburgh—demonstrate, the successful urban experience is not about multiplex theaters or “category-dominant chain retailers,” it’s about a vital and eclectic mix of businesses, night life, housing types, cultural amenities, corporate headquarters, and transportation options.
Downtown Denver: A Showplace

Lower Downtown Denver, or “LoDo” offers an appealing mix of housing, shopping, and entertainment in a 25-block area of warehouses and small commercial structures built between 1870 and 1920. Over the last decade, the district has attracted more than $120 million in private investment, spurred by tax incentives and a low-interest loan pool for building and streetscape improvements. Vacancy rates have fallen from 40 percent in 1988 to 7 percent today, with downtown boasting a 20 percent population increase since 1980. But, it wasn’t always that way for LoDo.

LoDo, a warehouse district around Denver’s Union Station, served as a bustling commercial area during Denver’s early boom years. After World War II and up through the height of urban renewal, one-fifth of the area’s building stock was demolished. In order to halt this ongoing demolition and preserve the historic character of the area, preservation advocates successfully persuaded the Denver City Council to create the Lower Downtown Historic District in 1988.

A combination of historic district zoning, infrastructure improvements, and a revolving loan fund administered by Historic Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership generated such activity that Lower Downtown led downtown Denver out of a recession by 1990. Today, most of its 131 historic buildings have been rehabbed for uses that include 550 housing units, 60 restaurants, 40 art galleries, and other retail businesses, hotels, and professional offices. With only a handful of the historic buildings not already rehabbed, developers are now focusing on compatible new construction to replace surface parking lots. In fact, more than $125 million in new infill projects are under construction in LoDo.

According to Denver’s Mayor Wellington Webb, “LoDo is a hip, energetic section of downtown full of restaurants, nightclubs, art galleries, shops, and new housing. Working in partnership with our business community, we are revitalizing once-dormant downtowns, and we are working hard to spread this success to our distressed neighborhoods and to create job opportunities, with decent wages, for all of our citizens.”

How did Denver do it? Following his election in 1991, Webb called a summit of downtown stakeholders...
including business people, the Downtown Denver Partnership (Denver’s downtown business advocacy group), the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, Historic Denver, and others. Downtown housing was identified as a top priority. As a result, the Downtown Denver Partnership established a downtown housing office that proactively marketed vacant buildings to housing developers and investors.

Meanwhile, the city reversed the climate that had previously inhibited housing by creating density bonuses, enacting design standards, and eliminating surface parking as a use-by-right—a big-city zoning disaster and “the biggest catalyst for building demolition,” according to Webb. “Once a downtown is more than one-third parking lots, it loses its character and sense of place.” These actions saved a critical mass of older buildings that could now function as housing.

The city’s next step was to provide financial incentives. The city provided bridge financing for unconventional housing projects; directed all private bond allocations toward downtown housing for three years; and created a $1 million revolving loan fund for housing. Other important elements in the city’s long-term plan, completed or under way, include developing a major downtown park along the South Platte River, placing a sports arena near downtown, supporting a performing arts complex, providing free shuttle bus service on the downtown mall, and maintaining downtown as the hub of the regional transportation system, including light rail.

The end result? Since 1991, more than 2,000 residential units, 1,200 hotel rooms, and more than 400,000 square feet of commercial space have been added to LoDo and the Central Business District. Warehouses, office buildings, banks, light industrial buildings, and department stores have been converted into hotels, retail, offices, and lofts. At last count, approxi-
mately 2,600 residential units were under construction, many in historic buildings.

Housing options in LoDo and downtown range from million-dollar lofts to below-market-rate apartments. With such regionally evocative names as Icehouse Lofts, John Deere Plow Lofts, and Rocky Mountain Warehouse Lofts, the history of downtown Denver is showcased for a burgeoning downtown population of 3,600.

LoDo’s growth has spurred revitalization uptown. The rate of residential growth in the upper end of downtown has been on par with LoDo. Several vacant office buildings at the upper end of downtown have been rehabbed for apartment and condominium units. These include the historic Boston Lofts, the Denver Dry Lofts, the A.T. Lewis & Rio Grande Lofts, Buerger Brothers Lofts, and Bank Lofts which include below-market-rate apartments for downtown employees.

In recognition of their significant contribution to the revitalization of downtown Denver, the International Downtown Association recognized the Downtown Denver Partnership, the City and County of Denver, and the Denver Urban Renewal Authority with the 1998 Outstanding Achievement Award for their shared effort in saving 51 historic buildings from the wrecking ball and helping developers convert them into lofts, hotels, restaurants, and offices.

A recent Denver Post article, “Downtown: A Real, Live Showplace,” observed that in Denver, “having almost run out of dilapidated warehouses to renovate, builders are transforming parking lots into loft and condo complexes.” Thus, in the West where the car is king, parking lots are giving way to buildings and walking to work has meant an urban renaissance for Denver. And, instead of attracting big-box, large-scale category-dominant retailers, the city wants “little-box retailers—grocery stores, hardware stores, pharmacies, bakeries, shoe-repair shops, and delis.”

Sounds like the downtowns of yesteryear, right? Wrong, it’s the downtown of tomorrow where high-tech start-ups, artists’ lofts, and 24-hour living make for a diverse, vibrant, and self-reliant urban village.

Chicago: Technology Starts Up Downtown

Beginning in 1997, with approval of landmark designation for more than 30 historic
buildings in downtown Chicago, Mayor Richard M. Daley put the City of Chicago in the driver’s seat by investing city resources into a preservation-based renewal strategy. Project developers are receiving city subsidies through permit fee waivers, tax increment financing, class-L property tax relief, and preservation easements. In addition, they are taking advantage of their buildings’ historic status to apply for federal tax credits. Some two dozen rehabilitation projects are under way in the East Loop—Chicago’s historic retail core—a diverse downtown neighborhood that brings together businesses, academic and cultural institutions, large and small retailers, restaurants, hotels, and homes. More than 15 historic buildings, previously Class B or C office buildings, are now being converted to housing or hotels. Notable examples include Daniel Burnham’s historic Reliance Building with a new life as a 122-room hotel, and the Fisher Building converting to rental housing. Additionally, the Carson, Prairie, Scott and Company building, Chicago’s famed department store, is undergoing a conversion of its upper floors to office space and the project developer has agreed to restore the historic cornice, long ago removed from this National Historic Landmark building.

The Wabash and State Street National Register Historic District has approximately 100 contributing buildings and, under the mayor’s leadership, the city is pushing a technology initiative for this area. In addition, the city is willing to step up as developer, acquiring the Lytton Building and using federal investment tax credits and tax increment financing to convert this former office building and department store into the city’s first center for information technology, with offices for high-tech startup firms. This building is a highly visible corner property, and the city sees its rehabilitation as a catalyst for further downtown revitalization efforts.

David Bahlman, executive director of the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, headquartered in Chicago, applauds the City of Chicago for its preservation-based approach to downtown revitalization, stating “there are only a few other cities in the United States that have demonstrated this level of commitment to preservation.”

Dallas: In-Town Living
On Wednesday, January 12, 2000, the Dallas City Council
voted unanimously to approve a new preservation ordinance that will allow demolition denial, address demolition by neglect, and establish a city-wide historic preservation fund. Preservation Dallas Executive Director Catherine Horsey sees the passage of this new ordinance as reflective of a new preservation spirit in Dallas, capping a decade-long struggle by preservationists to demonstrate to city leaders that preservation pays.

Unlike Chicago and Denver, where the leadership of the mayor and city agencies is sparking revitalization, in Dallas, a diverse mix of decision-makers is shaping downtown preservation. From Dallas-based developers to Hispanics representing the Guadalupe Social Center, community leaders are working together to support downtown revitalization. From the 1980s, the preservation battles were with individual property owners proposing piecemeal demolition of the historic core, culminating in the loss of the Old Cotton Exchange and the Dr. Pepper Building. Today, however, an economic study, *Historic Preservation at Work for the Texas Economy*, reports that property owners are utilizing city and national preservation tax incentive programs that have generated more than $260 million in economic investment in Dallas.

The City of Dallas offers tax exemptions to property owners in the downtown and the adjacent residential area within a one-mile radius of downtown, with additional exemptions for residential and retail conversions. Depending on the location, property owners are eligible to receive a 10-year abatement of city land and structures taxes on added value created by historic building improvements or a 100 percent exemption on land and structures taxes for 10 years. Dallas County also participates with tax incentives for larger projects.

Since 1993 when the property tax abatements were enacted, approximately 50 buildings have been rehabilitated within the targeted historic area. Today bringing a permanent population base downtown is critical to the downtown’s future. Demand for housing downtown is estimated at 14,000 units. Hundreds of new housing units have been completed in historic buildings, with one large project adding 800 new units.

And, it all began with the loss of a few key downtown buildings. As Horsey states, “In the early 1990s after we were threatened with the loss of the historic Cotton Exchange, city
leaders said we need to figure it out.” Eight years later and with 50 buildings fully rehabbed, downtown Dallas is proof of their success.

St. Louis: The Tax Credit Makes the Difference

While the reuse of historic buildings has a solid history of success in downtown Denver’s revitalization strategy, the City of St. Louis is just now picking up where it left off in the early 1980s with the adaptive use of historic buildings in its downtown core. And it’s the recently passed state historic tax credit that’s driving downtown revitalization.

The history and economy of St. Louis are inextricably linked to the meandering Mississippi and the city’s role as a regional trading center. The city’s population peaked in 1950 at a little over 856,000. But almost 50 years later, its population had plummeted to fewer than 340,000. During the late 70s and early 80s, the federal tax credit created tremendous opportunity for downtown revitalization with dozens of buildings rehabbed for new uses, including the biggest historic rehab project in the U.S. until that time—the St. Louis Union Station, which reopened in 1985 as a festival marketplace. But, after passage of the Federal Tax Reform Act of 1986, historic rehabilitation all but halted in downtown St. Louis. And, since that time, local preservationists led by the Landmarks Association of St. Louis have been fighting downtown demolitions spurred by a population decline, deferred maintenance, and general stagnation of downtown.

But now, according to Carolyn Toft, executive director of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, the tide is changing thanks to a new state tax credit. Missouri is one of the growing number of states that has enacted a state historic preservation income tax credit, providing a 25 percent transferable credit toward eligible rehabilitation costs for both residential and commercial projects. This new credit has resulted in nearly 20 new preservation projects in downtown St. Louis.

Building on the city’s reinvestment in downtown with the construction of a convention center, a 70,000-seat stadium, and an 18-mile light rail system connecting downtown to the airport, preservation-minded developers are contributing to a $1.2 billion investment in downtown. Cupples Station, a his-

Rehabilitated historic buildings in downtown St. Paul serve as a backdrop for a new public park, one of the community amenities created through the efforts of the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation. Photo courtesy of Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation.
toric railroad-freight depot featuring 10 historic buildings on 12 acres, is at the heart of that revitalization strategy. And, it’s the $50 million projected in state and federal historic tax credits that’s going to make this $250 million renovation project succeed, according to Cupples Station developer Richard D. Baron, president of McCormack Baron & Associates (and Trustee to the National Trust for Historic Preservation).

Cupples Station will include a 260-room Westin Hotel and a 500,000-square-foot mixed-use complex. Another redevelopment project in downtown St. Louis includes a 1,081-room Marriott Renaissance Hotel, involving the rehabilitation of two historic hotels. This $242 million project uses $18.5 million in state tax credits. The New Orleans-based developer for the project, Historic Restoration, Inc., will add to that $15.5 million in federal tax credits.

Two other historic hotel rehab projects and a dozen loft building housing conversions are planned for the old garment district. Even small business owners are benefiting from the new incentive. A local marketing and promotions firm, SJI, Inc., is slated to finish a rehab on its 176,000-square-foot headquarters building utilizing $1.3 million of state tax credits.

As Toft explains it, the downtown revitalization effort stunted in the 1980s is reborn. “Rehab is back. People throughout the city are reinvesting in historic buildings. A preservation industry has emerged once again.”

St. Paul: A Sustainable Urban Village

Lowertown, in downtown St. Paul, was once considered a “no man’s land” of abandoned warehouses and rail yards. Cut-and-clear urban renewal projects, much like those being proposed again today in Baltimore (Forum News, Nov./Dec. 1999, “Who Wants to Revive Urban Renewal?”) and Pittsburgh, had left gaping holes and economic ruin in their wake. The city’s leadership stepped forward with what was then a bold idea—use the historic warehouses as assets and promote their rehabilitation through mixed use as apartments and small business and retail properties. Mayor George Latimer approached the private McKnight Foundation with this idea and secured a $10 million grant to launch a nonprofit corporation as a catalyst for Lowertown’s revitalization. Formed as Lower-
town Redevelopment Corporation and headed by Weiming Lu, a planner and urban designer turned preservationist, this corporation serves as a marketing agency, a development bank, and an advocate for compatible urban design.

Working closely with developers, architects, property owners, retail businesses, and residents, Lowertown Redevelopment promotes using old buildings and compatible new construction to enhance the cultural fabric of the community. It emphasizes creating amenities for the area such as a new public park, playground, farmer’s market and streetscape enhancements. Artists’ lofts and galleries support a thriving cultural community with more than 500 artists living and working in the area. As Lu puts it, Lowertown includes “unique work spaces in renovated historic buildings, one of the most extensive fiber optic telecommunication infrastructures in the region, a satellite uplink, and a concentration of creative artists, designers and engineers who understand the new media and are finding ways to be part of them.”

Since 1978, Lowertown has attracted $428 million in new investment with two-thirds of the district’s previously vacant and crumbling historic structures put to productive use. That includes providing 1,500 housing units, 25 percent of which are low-to-moderate income, and 4,600 permanent jobs. In addition, the approach taken by Lowertown Redevelopment to encourage compatible urban design has resulted in rents that are generally 10 percent more per square foot than the rest of downtown St. Paul.

Yes, Pittsburgh, Too

Pittsburgh’s success revitalizing historic buildings had an early beginning. In the 1960s the city demolished thousands of Victorian-era row houses and displaced inner-city residents in order to construct massive sports arenas, shopping malls, and office complexes. In 1964 Arthur Ziegler and others interested in preserving the
historic buildings and improving the African-American neighborhoods in the city formed Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. The foundation created a revolving fund to purchase and rehab the most dilapidated structures and eventually convinced the city’s urban redevelopment authority to lease the rehabbed buildings, then rent them to lower-income residents.

In 1967, Ziegler began to work in two neighborhoods on Pittsburgh’s North Side—the Mexican War Streets and Manchester. He worked with residents of both neighborhoods to create the Mexican War Street Society and the Manchester Citizens Corporation (MCC). Year-after-year deteriorated structures were bought, rehabilitated, and rented or sold to neighborhood residents. Landmarks initiated a revolving loan fund in 1985 created by the sale of restored properties. Today more than 800 houses in Manchester have been rehabilitated, failed public housing projects have been demolished, and compatible new townhouses have been built. Recently, MCC began a multi-year $40 million neighborhood revitalization strategy.

In 1976, Landmarks embarked on its Station Square project—transforming a 52-acre railroad terminal site along the riverfront across from downtown Pittsburgh into a mixed-use retail, commercial, and entertainment complex. Completed as a demonstration project on the practical benefits of historic preservation, the site was redeveloped with no local public subsidy and only one federal grant of $980,000. Today, Station Square is home for 134 businesses with more than 3,000 employees. It attracts close to 3 million visitors each year, making it the top visitor attraction in the city, with a return to the city, county, and school board of $4 million annually in real estate and parking taxes.

Today, Pittsburgh’s residents are benefiting from their own example of historic preservation as the solution for urban revitalization. One of the first urban commercial districts to participate in the National Trust’s Main Street program, East Carson Street, has seen more than $50 million in private investment with 160 building rehab projects undertaken, and more than 200 new businesses and 750 new jobs created in the past decade.

As Ziegler sums it up, “In Pittsburgh, preservationists have developed positive plans for revitalizing neighborhoods, main streets, and older urban...
core areas with strong grass-roots support and representation. These plans have proven to work well.”

Lessons Learned

So what should Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and other cities considering urban renewal learn from other successful big-city revitalization efforts?

It takes committed, visionary leadership to remake downtown. The mayor plays a key role, but it requires other business and civic leaders, including a nonprofit partner who can advocate for incentives, market downtown resources, and promote historic preservation.

It requires coalitions to implement and sustain a long-term strategy for downtown revitalization. All partners—business groups, housing advocates, social services, law enforcement, preservationists, property owners—must be at the table. Through partnerships, obstacles to redevelopment are identified, creative solutions are found, and the benefits of economic expansion are credited to all.

It won’t happen without housing. Bringing people downtown means more than 9 to 5. It means 24-hour living. Eliminating impediments and creating incentives for downtown housing must be part of the redevelopment plan.

And, most importantly, it takes a plan! A comprehensive, phased strategy for downtown revitalization requires significant financial investment, buy-in by local and state stakeholders, and participation by the citizenry. A public process involving all the stakeholders including local businesses, investors, nonprofit organizations, and affected government agencies will result in a better plan with a greater chance of success.

Piecemeal approaches to redevelopment eventually fail, as have expansive tear-it-down, pave-it-over urban renewal programs. Cities with successful downtowns today started with the basics—creating a plan, building consensus, investing in existing building stock and local businesses, and making it easier to redevelop in downtown. And, ultimately what they’ve found is that preservation pays.

Our allegiance is to the future, but not at the expense of our past.

Lisa Burcham is director for the Statewide Partners at the National Trust. The author extends her thanks to the many local preservation, community development, and planning staff who provided background information and editing assistance for this article. A special note of appreciation goes to National Trust staff Jim Mann and Jim Lindberg and local preservationists Catherine Horsey, Cathy Broucek, Carolyn Toft, and Brian Goeken.
City Renewal Is Smart Growth

DeWayne H. Anderson

The following is an excerpt from a speech prepared for a statewide conference on smart growth held in Greensboro, N.C., in January 2000.

Plans for inner-city projects must take into account that cities are characterized by continuous change and by economic and social diversity. As a result, 40 is a dangerous age for buildings and neighborhoods. The original purpose for which buildings were built no longer exists, original design and construction errors are evident, design styles and the economic and social functions of the surrounding area have changed.

The sense of place which is present in great cities is created by the inventory of buildings built over a long period of time and rehabilitated many times for contemporary functions. Many cities have not preserved portions of their built heritage; the result is that they are placeless and unattractive areas to live and work.

All cities are unique; the mix of geographic location, history, economy, population, religious characteristics, construction, political and social styles differs in each community. Czech writer and politician Vaclav Havel describes each locality as possessing “an inimitable spiritual climate.” Plans for inner-city renewal need to be customized to fit each local situation. In the past, many local initiatives have been based on prevalent community development fads, on federal and state grant regulations, and on “model’ projects which may not fit local conditions.

Promote Public-Private Partnerships

Buildings in downtowns and neighborhoods are allowed to deteriorate and are demolished due to changing market conditions and the absence of local government initiatives to modify these trends. Local community rehabilitation initiatives need to be designed in recognition of the fact that private lenders and equity investors are motivated to invest in real estate to receive returns in the form of cash rents and tax benefits.

From the private investor’s perspective, commercial real estate is viewed as a commodity whose value is directly related to the amount and timing of profits; generally a
property’s value (or cost) cannot exceed about 100 times its monthly net rental income, \( CR=\frac{NOI}{VALUE} \). Typically, downtown rehabilitation projects’ costs are higher and rents are lower than at greenfield locations. As a result there is little incentive to invest in these properties.

Public-private partnerships provide a mechanism for increasing investment in rehabilitation projects by making high-risk downtown projects feasible. The role of local governments and their non-profit surrogates is to define public rehabilitation priorities, to provide financial support needed to bridge the financial feasibility gap, and to provide a loan packaging service to assist private sponsors in utilizing public financial tools.

The private partner’s role is to underwrite, construct, and operate the project. The private sponsor assumes the financial risk and the public elected officials assume the political risk. It needs to be emphasized that primary responsibility for built environment decisions rests with elected public officials and private developers since they are in control of the checkbook. Public officials are fiduciaries to voters and private developers are fiduciaries to lenders and equity investors.

Repopulate and Diversify Downtowns

Over the past 50 years, local public officials have initiated a number of activities to revitalize downtowns. Some of these public strategies include:

- Urban renewal—property acquisition and redevelopment for hotels, convention centers, parking decks, and government facilities
- Interstate highway and public transit improvements
- Art and culture centers
- Restaurant and entertainment districts
- Visitor centers and tourist attractions
- Marketing and promotion activities
- Sidewalk and pedestrian improvements
- Sports stadiums
• High-rise office construction
• Research centers and business incubators
• Farmers’ markets

Experience has shown that these public initiatives have not arrested downtown decline. Individuals typically do not make multi-purpose visits to downtown activities. A downtown trip to a festival, to work, to an art exhibit, or to a sports event does not materially affect property values. Successful downtown districts have multiple functions.

The key to downtown revitalization is for the public sector to focus resources on repopulating downtown districts by adapting the existing historic building stock for loftstyle housing on upper floors and small shops (maximum 50 foot deep) fronting on pedestrian streets. Holes in pedestrian blocks should be infilled with new structures that are compatible with neighboring buildings. Housing should be composed of about 80 percent market rate and 20 percent affordable rental and owner occupied units. All rehabilitation should be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.

Downtown high-rise buildings should be located away from existing historic pedestrian blocks. They should contain shops at sidewalk level, and mixed office and residential uses on upper floors.

When the number of downtown dwellings reaches about 1,000 units, then restaurants, entertainment establishments, and businesses will begin to expand to serve the residential market, and pedestrians will reclaim the sidewalks. Downtowns are renewed the old fashioned way, “one building at a time.”

Address Housing Needs

Renewal of inner-city neighborhoods has been a priority of local community development efforts for the past 50 years. In the 1960s, federal funding encouraged cities to undertake large-scale clearance and redevelopment of blighted neighborhoods. Although much was accomplished with urban renewal projects, experience has shown that many renewal plans created massive dislocation of vulnerable populations, which, in turn, destabilized neighborhoods. Furthermore these projects showed little respect for the inventory of historic buildings, and resulted in construction of new multi-family rental hous-
ing projects, which increased the concentration of low-income and racial minorities in central cities.

Over the past three decades, neighborhood renewal has focused on the rehabilitation of existing single-family dwellings. This strategy has extended the life of dwelling units, but it has not revitalized neighborhoods. Future inner-city neighborhood renewal should first focus on reconstruction of existing, sub-standard housing projects to reduce population density and to broaden the income, racial mix, and tenure of inner-city residents, and on construction of new replacement affordable housing located in the suburbs, convenient to emerging employment centers. A general goal is that a minimum of 20 percent of the housing stock of each suburban municipality should include rental units which are affordable to households at or below 60 percent of the county’s median income.

Second, the existing emphasis on the rehabilitation of single owner-occupied family dwellings should shift toward adaptive use of vacant schools in neighborhoods, and historic buildings in downtowns, and construction of new residential units on infill sites. New housing should include both rental and owner-occupied housing targeted to households above 80 percent of median income and to special needs populations. All future public single-family rehabilitation activities should include requirements for ongoing maintenance that ensure that units are not permitted to deteriorate.

Tools
A variety of tools can be used to create financially feasible rehabilitation projects. Some of these tools include:

- 10 or 20 percent federal rehabilitation tax credits for non-historic and historic structures, respectively.
- State tax credits, available in some states. For example, 20 and 30 percent rehabilitation tax credits are available in North Carolina for rental and owner-occupied historic structures, respectively.
- Four or nine percent per year, for ten years, federal affordable housing tax credits (maximum 60 percent of median income).
- State housing credits, offered in some states. For example, housing tax credits equal to 25 to 75 percent of federal housing credits, depending on the project’s
Federal and state tax credits can be used to create financially feasible rehabilitation projects. Photo courtesy of Landmark Asset Services.

Some Next Steps

The federal government should make it a condition of all future state and local grants that governments adopt and implement a five-year “smart-growth” program for urban regions, covering a 60-square-mile radius commuting area.

Plans should include:

• Minimum goals for the location and type of assisted housing for each political jurisdiction.

• Location and characteristics of new urban districts (10,000 population, 1/2-mile radius, mixed use, etc.).

• Location of open space buffers paralleling all major streams’ one hundred year flood plains.

• Location and timing of public transportation, utility, and facility improvements.

• Renewal plans for downtowns and inner-city neighborhoods.

State governments should take the following steps:

• Define state and multi-state urban regions.

• Change general enabling statutes to require all municipalities to prepare and implement “a smart growth five-year urban region program,” and to develop 20 percent of their housing stock for rental units which are afford-

county location, are available in North Carolina.

• Soft second below-market interest rate financing from HUD, HOME and CDBG entitlement grants or other city sources.

• Historic easement donations.

• Historic property tax assessments, available in some states. In North Carolina, for example, after-rehab property tax values are reduced by 50 percent.

• Public infrastructure improvements.

• Write-down of property acquisition costs.

• In-kind donations of local government services.
able to 60 percent median income tenants.

- Direct all state investments in transportation, public facilities, and federal pass-throughs toward plan implementation.

Local governments should implement the following:

- Urge local candidates for elected office to define positions on affordable housing, and suburban and center city growth issues.

- Re-engineer the local government’s administrative staff to be active participants in public-private partnership underwriting.

- Revise land development regulations to create new multi-purpose districts at locations where environmental impacts will be minimal and where residents will have easy access to public transportation and other services, and restrict all new development from undesired locations.

- Develop and approve National Register Historic District nominations to qualify inner-city buildings for tax credits.

- Budget local funds to support inner-city rehabilitation and infill.

Nonprofits organizations should consider the following steps:

- Take the lead in preserving flood plain open space buffers.

- Monitor local government’s performance in implementing the smart growth program and lobby for election of candidates who support implementation of the program.

Cities represent one of man’s most complex economic and social systems. Renewal of inner-city districts and better control of new suburban growth will require large amounts of public financial resources and political willpower. Otherwise, it is likely that the negative public health, environmental, and livability consequences of unplanned city growth will be allowed to increase to a point where judicial intervention will be needed to force smart growth action by federal, state, and local government authorities.

DeWayne H. Anderson is vice president for Landmark Asset Services, Inc., and president of Anderson Development Company. Based in Winston-Salem, N.C., Landmark Asset Services, Inc., Anderson Development Company, and Rehab Builders, Inc., are affiliated organizations that are experienced in development, construction, and management of historic rehab and infill projects in downtowns and inner-city neighborhoods.
New Housing Designs Based on Traditional Mississippi Architecture

Jane Britt Greenwood, AIA

Architectural education has always been about hands-on learning. This type of learning, however, can no longer be done solely within the confines of the design studio. This is not only due to the rate at which construction technologies and techniques are changing, but also due to the demands of clients for more innovative, cost-effective, and energy-efficient designs. Therefore I have been working with our local chapter of Habitat for Humanity over the past year to develop a research and design-build project for student involvement.

In addition to giving students hands-on experience applying fundamental professional skills—from creative thinking and problem solving to interacting with clients to planning and meeting budgets and deadlines—this project has been designed to provide something more. Students will learn the importance of respecting existing cultural environments so that they can create new buildings that reinforce a sense of place.

Developing a Proposal for a New Housing Prototype

In 1998, I received an Arts and Humanities grant to research residential vernacular architecture in Mississippi and to use that research as a basis for proposing and developing a new dwelling prototype for Habitat for Humanity. Along with meeting Habitat’s universal requirements, this prototype would simultaneously be vernacular and indigenous to the region, climate, and culture of the rural South.

The early stages of this research took place within the framework of a seminar that I taught to second-, third-, and fourth-year architecture students at Mississippi State University entitled “The Architecture of Housing.” The course was structured in a lecture, seminar, and community service format that enabled students to learn about the architectural evolution of Mississippi vernacular housing styles, to challenge the role of politics and economics in the design and construction of affordable housing, and to understand current—while...
possibly impacting future—housing trends by physically visiting and documenting indigenous dwellings.

We began the semester by researching the Habitat organization and meeting with the local Habitat affiliate. Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit, Christian-affiliated ecumenical housing group that builds houses in partnership with low-income families. Since the organization relies heavily on volunteerism, the house designs generally evolve from past projects, Habitat staff members, and, most recently, from a book of plans distributed by the international arm of the organization.

While architects are among the volunteers, at both the national and international level, it appears that Habitat most often utilizes their expertise in administrative matters that involve interpretation of building codes and interaction with city building departments. We also found that Habitat’s philosophy of relying on simple, no-frill plans as an avenue for constructing conventional and uncomplicated houses is due to the organization’s reliance on a volunteer labor pool. What has evolved, from an architectural point of view, are generic designs that often have no connection to their place. Therefore, even though we recognized and acknowledged Habitat’s goal to produce low-income houses that become part of the neighborhood, we posed the following question: Must the requirement of using low-skill labor be at odds with the need for producing a dwelling type that responds to its place in terms of tradition, style, building materials and methods, and climate control?

In order to learn more about the relationship between construction techniques and volunteer labor, we wanted to work on one of the local houses during the semester of this research. This desired involvement helped us identify our first design challenge. In order for construction to begin, the house foundation had to be laid. Laying the foundation is one aspect of the

Several Habitat styles resembled existing vernacular house styles native to northeastern Mississippi.
construction process that does not rely on volunteer labor. The local affiliate hires a contractor to pour the slab foundation, and, since there is currently so much new construction occurring in our area, the contractor was not going to be able to get the work done before the end of the semester.

As a result of this setback, the students decided to develop a proposal for constructing a foundation that does not rely on skilled labor. At the same time, it forced us to question the appropriateness of slab on grade construction since the soil in our area contains a large amount of clay which, over time through expansion and contraction, can cause cracking in the foundation and/or walls.

At this point we also determined that the construction technique of slab on grade was not vernacular to our area. Most houses in this part of the south are built on piers with a crawl space. Raising the house off the ground allows for air movement between the ground and the floor, which contributes to interior cooling during the hot humid summer months. Some winters are more harsh than others, however, so our proposal for a new foundation design also had to address winter heat loss issues. By the end of the semester, we had developed a proposal for an alternative foundation system aimed at eliminating the need for skilled labor, limiting the amount of site work, and ultimately saving on material cost. Since the size and spacing of the piers needs to respond to the house itself, further design and refinement of this foundation system will evolve as the design of the prototype evolves.

Researching Vernacular House Styles

While we worked to develop a proposal for the foundation plan, students also began to research house types that we felt were most representative of vernacular house styles native to our location in Mississippi—the northeastern part of the state.

Working in teams of two, students researched the dogtrot, shotgun, bungalow, planters cottage, L-front, and I-house. In addition to gathering information from books, journals, and the internet, students were asked to find what they believed to be an existing example of the house type they researched. The example had to be found in counties contiguous to our county, to
make sure the example was specific to our location.

Finally, in order for us to further determine the qualities that make a house belong to a particular place, we needed to understand the physical factors (which we defined as climate, materials, technology, and site); social factors (defined as economics, safety, family structure, and spatial organization); and architectural factors (defined as style, form, and structure) that impact and influence house design in rural Mississippi.

The next phase of research involved making a comparison between one of the vernacular house styles the students were researching and one of the house plans from the Habitat plan book. To our surprise we found that several of the Habitat styles resembled a few of the house styles we had researched; most notably, the shotgun and the dogtrot. As a group we decided to do a comparative analysis between the Habitat “dogtrot” and a historical dogtrot found in Ackerman, Miss. Students produced measured drawings of these two house styles.

The next phase of research will continue the detailed comparative analysis of these two houses in terms of the following: site characteristics; orientation and placement of each house on its site; the relationship between each house plan, section, and elevation; massing and volumetric characteristics; building footprint; roof forms and overhangs; materials and methods of construction; window types and styles; exterior and interior colors and finishes; methods of heating and cooling; strategies for energy efficiency; and indigenous and/or vernacular characteristics. From this analysis, along with recommendations and suggestions from current Habitat homeowners, we hope to see a vernacular prototype evolve that, in addition to providing a roof over one’s head and a requisite amount of square footage, has specific regional and cultural meaning.

**Future Impacts**

As Habitat looks to provide new housing stock and improve property values, it is poised to positively alter public perceptions of affordable housing. Developing a new prototype will not only prevent these dwellings from being labeled “the Habitat house” but further identification, research, and documentation of dwellings indigenous to the South will enable our local Habitat affiliate to develop design
and construction guidelines more sympathetic to the context of existing neighborhoods. And the continued involvement of my students will enable them to learn to think more critically about the impact their design solutions will have on the built environment—an environment that not only involves the architecture itself, but also involves the inhabitants, the neighborhood, and the community.

The students’ work is still in the research phase. It would not be appropriate for us to develop the prototype and then go to Habitat and say, “Here is what you should build.” Instead we hope to prove that the prototype does have more of a sense of place, that it fits in better with the community, and that it can be built in a cost-effective fashion.

Research-based projects, such as our work with Habitat, not only introduce students to knowledge already existing in a particular field of study, but it allows and encourages students to discover new knowledge. In the case of the research involving the search for a new housing prototype, students discovered the importance of having a strong and clear relationship between regional, cultural, and architectural context.

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Analyzing the Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation

Although preservation has long been recognized as an important stimulus for economic development and community revitalization, recent studies have made significant gains toward achieving a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of its total economic effects. Advanced research methodologies and sophisticated input-output models for data analysis have provided economists with the tools necessary to identify the direct and indirect effects of preservation activity and to track the flow of preservation expenditures through local and regional economies with considerable precision.

In recent years, however, such studies have increased in accuracy and broadened in scope, and economists have begun to rethink the basic methods used for research on the economic effects of preservation. What should be counted among the direct and indirect effects of preservation spending? How should data be collected on complex subjects such as heritage tourism and commercial activity in historic downtown districts? And how should “quality of life” factors—reduced rates of crime in historic neighborhoods, for example, and the aesthetic and environmental benefits of preservation—be quantified?

These and related questions were the focus of a one-day seminar held at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., in October 1998. More than 30 experts attended the seminar, including representatives from the World Bank and the National Trust for Historic Preservation and economists from major research universities, government agencies, and private firms.

Sponsored by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT), the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) at Rutgers University, the Harvard University Department of Urban Planning and Design (DUPD), and the Brookings Institution’s Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, and organized by Professors David...
Listokin and Michael L. Lahr, the seminar provided a forum for discussing fundamental research issues and identifying new directions for future studies.

In a brief introduction, David Listokin, a professor of Urban Planning at Rutgers’ CUPR and a visiting lecturer on historic preservation at Harvard’s DUPD, set the tone for the seminar by emphasizing the challenges that economists face in gaining access to useful data. Due to prohibitively high collection costs, economists are unable to gather data specifically for economic impact studies and therefore must rely on data from a variety of sources. Professional organizations are among the most common sources, but their records are typically organized in a format designed to suit institutional priorities, not the needs of research economists.

Listokin suggested that economists could improve the availability of useful data by working with such organizations to ensure that the needs of economists are included in ongoing information collection programs—a point that was repeatedly echoed by other seminar participants throughout the day.

Heritage Tourism, Property Values, and Urban Revitalization

Individual presentations addressed the full range of topics related to the economic impacts of preservation, including heritage tourism, property values in historic districts, and the benefits of historic property designation.

Catherine Shaw, director of marketing research for the Travel Industry of America (TIA), discussed the survey data that her organization collects on heritage tourism and how it can be used by economists. TIA, a professional organization of travel agents, lodging and transportation providers, and tourism-related businesses, conducts research to provide its members with essential data for their day-to-day operations. TIA’s ongoing efforts include a telephone survey which tracks public interest in travel to historic sites and has so far compiled nearly 20 years of data, and monthly distribution and collection of approximately 20,000 questionnaires from travelers who have recently visited a heritage tourism destination. Analysis of this information seeks to establish travelers’ spending patterns,
transportation and lodging preferences, and interest in various types of historic attractions.

The spending patterns of travelers visiting historic destinations was addressed in greater detail by Bill Siegel, president of Longwoods International, a tourism consulting firm. For his research, Siegel typically obtains data by surveying travelers soon after they have completed a trip. His studies have addressed a variety of issues, including the role of historic activities (such as visits to historic landmarks and house museums), “folk culture” (attractions such as “interesting architecture,” local music, and unique local cuisine), and high culture (such as large museums and art galleries).

Siegel has found that the largest percentage of on-site spending by heritage tourists goes toward “spin off” costs such as lodging, food, and retail purchases; by contrast, spending for items such as entry fees for historic sites or museums tends to be minimal.

Siegel and other seminar participants also discussed the need to better define “heritage tourism” and to distinguish it from other types of travel. Many economists have differing opinions on what constitutes heritage tourism. If a traveler visits Williamsburg, Va., for a business conference but also spends an afternoon touring Colonial Williamsburg, should the trip be considered a heritage tourism excursion? What percentage of the traveler’s total trip expenditures should be regarded as heritage tourism spending? Economists must come to a consensus on such issues if future studies are to produce useful and readily comparable information.

Main Street programs have long been a cornerstone of preservation activity in communities across the nation and, in turn, a major stimulus for preservation-related spending.

Doug Loescher of the National Trust gave an overview of the Main Street program and described the type of economic data that individual Main Street communities routinely collect on historic downtown districts. Loescher emphasized that the Main Street program does not focus solely on preservation activity but instead uses a comprehensive approach to foster economic growth. It is, in short, as much an economic development and downtown revitalization program as a preservation program, a fact that economists must take into account.
account when assessing the effects of Main Street initiatives on local economies.

The data produced by the Main Street program may prove useful to economists studying the economic impacts of historic preservation. From the outset, the National Trust has stipulated what data must be collected by individual Main Street communities and, therefore, what is collected annually on a national scale.

At the same time, the information supplied by individual communities tends to vary widely and is not organized in a standardized reporting format. As a result, the compiled data available from the National Trust may be difficult for researchers to use effectively. It is, however, a largely untapped resource that has the potential to serve as the basis for detailed studies on preservation spending at the local level.

Beyond the downtown district, the economic landscape of many communities has been reshaped by the establishment of historic districts in residential neighborhoods. Donovan Rypkema of the Real Estate Services Group presented the results of his recent work on property values and demographic trends in National Register and local landmark districts. Such issues have been the focus of several studies conducted by the Real Estate Services Group.

In Evanston, Ind., for example, Rypkema examined the relationship between preservation activity and real estate market values in two comparable historic districts—one a National Register district, the other a local landmark district. He found that property values in each district rose at a higher rate than the community average, but the rate of increase in the local district was markedly stronger than in the National Register district. Occupancy patterns in the local district were also significantly more stable, and the racial diversity of residents was greater than the community average. Rypkema concluded that such findings attest to the efficacy of strong local landmark ordinances and the importance of grassroots preservation activism.

Other projects undertaken by the Real Estate Services Group have studied the effects of preservation on community demographics. An analysis of residential occupancy patterns in a historic district in Elkhart, Ind., determined that the district mirrored the overall demographic structure of the entire community.
Similar findings resulted from a more elaborate study of National Register districts in Philadelphia. Rypkema also determined that the districts included in the Philadelphia study were more racially diverse and were losing population at a slower rate than other neighborhoods in the city. Based on these studies, Rypkema suggested that preservation promotes diversity and provides a measure of demographic stability not generally found in urban real estate markets. While these factors clearly demonstrate the far-reaching benefits of preservation activity, how they can best be quantified by economists remains a challenge.

David Clark, a professor of economics at Marquette University, addressed the research methodologies that are commonly used to study the effects of historic designation on property values. Clark highlighted the factors that economists must consider in conducting such studies. He spoke in particular about the two methods used to track changes in property values: the hedonic and repeat sales analysis. In his work, Clark has employed a hedonic approach, which he believes to be the most comprehensive and accurate means of analysis. The hedonic approach surveys a broad range of factors, including the effects within the neighborhood designated as a historic district, spillover effects (those outside the neighborhood), and potential costs such as compliance expenses (expenditures by property owners to meet design guidelines) and bureaucratic costs (for management of the district).

The other research method commonly employed is repeat sales analysis, which focuses on changes in sale prices of properties following an event (such as the establishment of a historic district). It offers potentially better controls for assessing housing quality and neighborhood characteristics, but its major disadvantage is that it can only be employed in a neighborhood where historic designation has recently changed.

Clark optimistically noted that the information needed for property value studies is fast becoming more readily available. Several years ago the only way to compile adequate data on property values in a particular neighborhood was to spend countless hours in the local courthouse examining tax rolls and deed transfers. Commercial firms, however, now offer this information for a small fee. Because
of the vast quantity of high-quality data that has recently become available, economists are now able to conduct property value studies more efficiently and to spend more time on data analysis and less on data collection.

Economists are already using the increased availability of data for cutting-edge research on property values. Robin Leichenko of the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers and Edward Colson, a professor of economics at Pennsylvania State University, discussed their current project, which focuses on property values in historic districts in a fairly large and diverse sample of Texas cities. The information is drawn from appraisal listings and real estate multiple listing services. Their research showed that historic designation increased property values in Texas communities by between 5 and 20 percent.

The effect of different appraisal methods on historic property values was discussed by Richard Roddewig of Clarion Associates, Inc. Economists face a number of problems in attempting to assess the degree to which historic designation affects the marketable value of a given property.

Value is, in many cases, a relative term. A property’s historic and cultural value may be far greater than its market value, for example, and its investment value may be different still. For obvious reasons, economists must give careful consideration to these factors in conducting economic impact studies. No simple formula exists for assessing the effect of historic designation on property values. Roddewig noted, however, that professional appraisers’ experience with historic properties has increased dramatically in recent years, and useful information about key issues such as easements and landmarks ordinances is now readily available. Historic property appraisals are consequently becoming increasingly accurate. Thus, while economists still need to examine appraised values with a measure of caution, these concerns should become less of a factor as appraisers’ experience with historic properties continues to improve in the coming years.

Input-Output Models: Measuring the Economic Impact of Historic Preservation

Sophisticated economic models typically use data generated from various preservation-related activities to estimate...
their overall economic impacts. Rutgers University Professor Michael Lahr, a national I-O expert, surveyed various regional input-output (I-O) models available and discussed the major differences among them. William Schaffer, a professor of economics at the Georgia Institute of Technology, spoke about the features common to all I-O models and the fundamental assumptions upon which they are based.

I-O models attempt to track with precision the overall effects of a given project on the economy of a given area. By tracing the course of a specific amount of money after it enters an economy, an I-O model accounts for the changes that take place in every sector of the economy due its entry and, hence, its resulting effects on related sectors.

The impacts estimated by I-O models are not entirely verifiable, but they tend to be fairly accurate in practice and remain the best means available for estimating regional economic impact. The prohibitively high costs that would be involved in compiling comprehensive survey-based I-O tables currently stand in the way of efforts to develop more accurate models.

In addition, despite the significant differences between models, such as the types of regional data used to scale the model for the various sectors of the economy (e.g., services versus manufacturing), they tend to produce strikingly similar results, which provides yet another measure of their general accuracy.

George Treyz of Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI), discussed the distinctive features of the economic model that his firm has developed. The REMI model is considered an “integrated and dynamic” model for two reasons. First, the REMI model incorporates time-series econometric data and modeling—in essence, the year-to-year measurement consequences of spending on a project as opposed to only the cumulative long-run impacts—and, second, maintains equilibrium attributes of I-O. By accounting for such factors through the REMI model, one can see the impacts of staged effects and one can determine the effects on projects and changes in life quality on such economic items as wage levels, home prices, and migration flows at specific points in time.

Indeed, using this model, George Treyz showed how a
change in the quality of life would affect the economy. Ensuing discussion at the seminar underscored the difficulty for economists to agree upon appropriate methods for quantifying “quality of life” (QOL) factors. It was clear, nonetheless, that QOL figures prominently among the benefits of historic preservation and should therefore be considered in future studies.

Also significant are the subtle but important ways QOL improves the environmental aesthetics of communities. Hence, as estimates of QOL become more available, the approach demonstrated by George Treyz is likely to gain popularity.

Conclusions

While issues of data quality must be resolved if the economic impacts of historic preservation are to be accurately and comprehensively assessed, the wealth of data gathered for preservation advocacy purposes stands ready to be used for economic impact studies, provided economists are willing to approach it with appropriate caution.

Unstated assumptions—that tourists enjoy visiting historic communities, for instance, or that Main Street programs are effective in stimulating economic growth—often influence the means by which various organizations collected such data and, therefore, the compiled results.

Such data offer important opportunities, but economists must be aware of the potential pitfalls that may be encountered if this information is not subjected to critical and rigorous analysis. To conduct objective and accurate economic impact studies, economists must be willing to ask difficult questions—Do all communities benefit from heritage tourism? Does preservation always increase property values?—to balance the biases often inherent in data collected for preservation advocacy.

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David Listokin is a professor at the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.
Preservation organizations in two states—New Jersey and Texas—commissioned the authors to conduct comprehensive investigations of the contributions of historic preservation in their respective states. The New Jersey Historic Trust conducted the New Jersey study and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) oversaw the Texas study. Funding for the two studies was provided by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, THC, Texas Certified Local Governments (CLGs), and other sources.

The two state investigations (hereinafter referred to as the “NJ-TX studies”) build from prior studies and extend the state of the art in several ways. More so than in prior investigations, the NJ-TX studies develop preservation-specific data. Examples include profile information on heritage travelers (as opposed to general tourists) and data on their spending patterns, and data on the labor and material requirements related specifically to historic rehabilitation (as opposed to general rehabilitation).

The NJ-TX studies are comprehensive analyses. There are many facets to historic preservation, and a study of its economic impacts should incorporate as many of these as possible. The NJ-TX investigations attempt to do this by analyzing the respective economic contribution of: (1) historic rehabilitation; (2) heritage tourism; (3) Main Street investment; (4) operation of historic sites and organizations; and (5) property value and property tax contributions of historic properties.

Finally, the NJ-TX studies consider both the direct effects of preservation-related activities and the indirect and induced economic impacts. In brief, the total or multiplier effect, sometimes referred to as the ripple effect, has three elements:

1. A direct effect (the initial action causing the ripple effects) is the change in purchases due to a change in economic activity.

2. An indirect effect is the change in the purchases of
suppliers to the economic activity directly experiencing change.

3. An induced effect is the change in consumer spending that is generated by changes in labor income within the region as a result of the direct and indirect effects.

To illustrate, the direct effects encompass the goods and services immediately involved in the economic activity analyzed, for example historic rehabilitation. This could include, for historic rehabilitation, carpenters hired and steel purchased. Indirect effects encompass the value of goods and services needed to support the provision of the direct effects (e.g., materials purchased by the steel plant). Induced effects include the goods and services needed by the households who provide the direct and indirect labor required to rehabilitate a historic structure (e.g., food purchases by the carpenters’ or steelworkers’ households). Indirect and induced effects are estimated using an input-output model.

The analysis in both studies presents the direct effects of the components of historic preservation (e.g., historic rehabilitation and heritage tourism) and then applies the RSRC model to derive the multiplier effects. Economic effects are specified with respect to the following:

- **Jobs**: Effects on employment, both part time and full time, by place of work are estimated using the typical job characteristics of each detailed industry. (Manufacturing jobs, for example, tend to be full time; in retail trade and real estate, part-time jobs dominate.) Thus, the job figures are expressed as job-years; that is, several individuals might fill one job-year on a given project.

- **Income**: Income figures include earned or labor income—specifically, wages, salaries, and proprietor income. Income does not include nonwage compensation (i.e., benefits, pensions, or insurance), transfer payments, or dividends, interest, or rents.

- **Wealth**: Wealth is estimated as value added—the subnational-level equivalent of gross domestic product (GDP); at the state level, it is called gross state product (GSP). Value added is widely accepted by economists as the best measure of economic well-being.

- **Taxes**: Tax revenues generated by the activity are detailed for the federal, state, and local levels of government.

**New Jersey and Texas Studies on the Economic Contribution of Historic Preservation**

The direct and total effects of historic preservation in New Jersey and Texas are summa-
rized in exhibits 1 and 2 respectively. In examining the results, the tremendous difference in the population size of the two states must be considered (e.g., in 1997, Texas had a population of 19.4 million, compared with New Jersey’s 8.1 million residents). Understandably, therefore, the direct and total impacts of historic preservation are larger in absolute terms in Texas than in New Jersey.

The following sections highlight the important findings from the NJ-TX studies and briefly describe critical data collection and analytic steps. The New Jersey study relied on 1994 data (then the most current available) while the Texas study, conducted later, had a 1996 to 1997 baseline.

**Historic Rehabilitation**

New Jersey invested approximately $123 million in historic rehabilitation in 1994; Texas invested approximately $173 million in 1997. These figures were comparable: the $123 million represented 6 percent of New Jersey’s $2.0 billion total rehabilitation expenditure, and the $173 million accounted for 4 percent of Texas’s $4.2 billion total rehabilitation expenditures. The $123 million and $173 million estimates were based on sampling and other sources.

In New Jersey, for example, the sample included a range of community types: urban, mature suburb, developing suburb, and rural. We determined the historic rehabilitation incidence (i.e., the share of total rehabilitation that was effected on properties designated as historic on national, state, and/or local registers) for each community type. Next, we extrapolated to obtain statewide results.

A similar procedure was applied in Texas. The historic rehabilitation incidence was developed for nine Certified Local Governments (CLGs) participating in the study, and using these data, as well as building permit and census information for the remaining Texas communities, a statewide estimate of historic rehabilitation was made.

The New Jersey and Texas statewide historic rehabilitation investments ($123 million and $173 million respectively) were entered into the RSRC model using four general property types. Before typing these data, however, we first “deconstructed” the labor and material components of historic rehabilitation (as opposed to general rehabilitation).
This analysis was based on an examination of the details of almost 60 historic rehabilitation projects encompassing nearly $100 million of construction work in different types of historic buildings (single-family, multifamily, and nonresidential). The analysis also considered the type and extent of construction activity performed (e.g., the extent of systems upgrading work, and interior or exterior repairs). From these detailed case studies, the research specified the precise “bundle” of construction activities that constitute historic rehabilitation.

The RSRC model translated each state’s historic rehabilitation investments by property type. These, in turn, were summed into the total economic impacts (statewide and national) noted in exhibits 1 and 2. For example, statewide impacts in New Jersey included the generation of more than 2,300 jobs, $81 million in income, and $116 million in GSP. The national economic impacts from Texas’s historic rehabilitation included almost 8,150 new jobs, $251 million in income, and $346 million in GDP.

**Heritage Tourism**
The incidence and profiles of heritage travelers were segregated from annual travel surveys conducted by both states. Of the 366 million person-days of travel in Texas, 40.7 million, or 11.1 percent, were heritage-related. The heritage traveler share of person-days of travel in New Jersey was 5.4 percent. In both states, heritage travelers spend relatively more than average travelers do (e.g., in Texas, heritage travelers spend $114 daily compared with $88 spent daily by other travelers).

Statewide, total annual heritage tourism spending was estimated at $432 million in New Jersey and $1.434 billion in Texas. Texas is clearly a better-known heritage tourism destination despite New Jersey’s higher density of historic properties. Further, Texas’s larger size helps it to retain more of the jobs related to this retail-based activity.

Using the information from each state’s annual travel survey, we were able to determine heritage travelers’ spending for lodging, food, entertainment, and other purposes. These results were entered into the RSRC Model. The tremendous economic contribution of heritage travel is detailed in exhibits 1 and 2.

Nationally, Texas heritage tourism generated almost 59,000 jobs, $1.536 billion in
income, $2.377 billion in GDP, and $0.722 billion in taxes.

For New Jersey, the national figures were 15,530 new jobs, $383 million in income, $559 million in GDP, and $216 million in taxes.

**Main Street Programs & Historic Sites & Organizations**

More than 1,200 communities across the nation have used the Main Street approach to invigorate their downtown areas. Texas has the largest number of Main Street sites (approximately 80) of any state in the nation. On a periodic basis, communities participating in the Texas Main Street Program (as is true in other states) compile standardized data, such as the number of business starts, data on new construction, and data on rehabilitation. If we subtract rehabilitation outlays (since we want to avoid double counting), the net Texas Main Street investment was $97 million. The total national economic impacts, including both direct and multiplier effects, from the $97 million Texas Main Street investment was determined by the RSRC model to encompass approximately 4,100 new jobs, $113 million in income, $171 million in GDP, and $53 million in taxes. The in-state Texas gains were approximately 50 to 60 percent of these figures.

We also determined the spending of historic sites and organizations. This information was obtained from both in-state surveys and surveys conducted by Rutgers.

Thus, in New Jersey, a Rutgers survey determined that the state's historic sites and organizations spend $36 million annually. To avoid double counting, we had to ascertain the economic impacts added by historic sites and organizations over and above the economic contributions of the historic preservation components already tallied (e.g., historic rehabilitation at the sites and the revenues received from heritage travelers). Subtracting the rehabilitation costs and visitor revenues resulted in an estimated annual net spending by New Jersey historic sites and organizations of $25 million.

This direct spending was then translated into total economic impacts through the RSRC input-output model. The New Jersey results are shown in exhibit 1. The same process was used to determine annual net spending by historic museums in Texas, the results of which are shown in exhibit 2.

**Property Values**

A side-by-side comparison was made of the property values of historic properties (i.e., designated properties) and comparable nonhistoric properties in nine Texas CLGs. A hedonic analysis was performed to control for various housing quantity attributes. Historic designation was associated with higher property values in all of the CLGs, with that difference found to be statistically significant in seven of the nine communities.

In the cities where historic designation had a statistically significant effect on property values, average property value increases ranged between 5 percent and 20 percent of the total property value. In dollar terms (dollar-value change per housing unit), historic designation was associated with average increases in housing values ranging between approximately $3,000 and $19,000.

**Application of Studies on the Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation**

Studies such as those conducted in New Jersey and Texas can be used to demonstrate the tremendous economic pump-priming effect of historic preservation. The total
annual national economic impacts of New Jersey’s preservation activities amounted to almost 22,000 new jobs, $572 million in income, $929 million in GDP, and $415 million in taxes. The in-state New Jersey impacts included approximately 10,100 new jobs, $263 million in income, $543 million in GSP, and $298 million in taxes.

For Texas, the total annual national economic impacts included approximately 73,200 new jobs, $1.956 billion in income, $2.967 billion in GDP, and $904 million in taxes. The in-state Texas impacts included approximately 40,700 new jobs, $890 million in income, $1.471 billion in GSP, and $445 million in taxes. Although not detailed in this article, the above economic impacts are spread throughout the economy, from agriculture to manufacturing.

Our research showed that preservation was often a superior economic catalyst compared with other investments. For example, in New Jersey, $1 million in nonresidential historic rehabilitation was found to generate 38.3 jobs nationally and 19.3 jobs in-state. In comparison, $1 million in new nonresidential construction was found to generate fewer jobs: 36.1 jobs nationally and 16.7 jobs in-state.

Our analysis can be used to rebut unwarranted but nonetheless common attacks on preservation. While opponents find it difficult to disagree that preservation is a “good thing,” they often allege that preserving the past will “cost jobs” or will “lower property values.” Our research shows that such allegations are simply wrong-headed.

Economic results, like those above, can be used to justify incentives for historic preservation. Texas allows all taxing entities to offer property tax relief for the preservation of historically significant properties. The economic benefits of such preservation (documented in the Texas study), including enhanced tax revenues, reduce the tax cost of the property tax incentives.

Similarly, Rutgers used the results of the New Jersey investigation to show that the public cost of capital grants for historic rehabilitation that were distributed by the New Jersey Historic Trust was easily offset by state tax revenues resulting from those investments.

For too many years, preservation has been defended solely on aesthetic grounds. NJ-TX-type studies show that preservation also provides significant economic benefits. Rutgers is currently analyzing the economic impacts of preservation in Missouri and hopes to apply the analysis in other locations.

David Listokin and Michael L. Lahr are professors at the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

REFERENCES


Exhibit 1
Summary of the Annual Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in New Jersey
(Impacts as of 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Historic Rehabilitation</th>
<th>II. Heritage Tourism</th>
<th>III. Spending by NJ Historic Sites and Organizations</th>
<th>IV. Historic Stock Valuation</th>
<th>V. Total Examined Economic Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$123 million in annual historic rehabilitation expenditures results in:</td>
<td>$432 million in annual heritage-traveler-attributed expenditures results in:</td>
<td>$25 million in annual spending results in:</td>
<td>Landmark properties, valued at $6 billion, pay annual property taxes of:</td>
<td>(Sum I–IV)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Jersey Direct Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>GDP(^a)</th>
<th>Taxes: Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Tax Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4,607</td>
<td>$156 million</td>
<td>$207 million</td>
<td>$41 million</td>
<td>$13 million</td>
<td>$11 million</td>
<td>$65 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,530</td>
<td>$383 million</td>
<td>$559 million</td>
<td>$110 million</td>
<td>$78 million</td>
<td>$28 million</td>
<td>$216 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>$33 million</td>
<td>$43 million</td>
<td>$9 million</td>
<td>$3 million</td>
<td>$2 million</td>
<td>$14 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21,575</td>
<td>$572 million</td>
<td>$929 million</td>
<td>$120 million</td>
<td>$94 million</td>
<td>$120 million</td>
<td>$415 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total National Impacts (Direct and Multiplier)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>GDP(^a)</th>
<th>Taxes: Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Tax Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63,376</td>
<td>$1,436 million</td>
<td>$2,145 million</td>
<td>$540 million</td>
<td>$130 million</td>
<td>$140 million</td>
<td>$811 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150,180</td>
<td>$3,557 million</td>
<td>$5,257 million</td>
<td>$1,298 million</td>
<td>$1,298 million</td>
<td>$1,298 million</td>
<td>$6,745 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24,305</td>
<td>$664 million</td>
<td>$2,000 million</td>
<td>$43 million</td>
<td>$3 million</td>
<td>$2 million</td>
<td>$14 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>265,915</td>
<td>$5,760 million</td>
<td>$5,280 million</td>
<td>$1,278 million</td>
<td>$94 million</td>
<td>$120 million</td>
<td>$415 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In-State NJ Total Impacts (Direct and Multiplier)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>GDP(^a)</th>
<th>Taxes: Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Tax Subtotal</th>
<th>In-State Wealth(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,316</td>
<td>$81 million</td>
<td>$116 million</td>
<td>$23 million</td>
<td>$8 million</td>
<td>$7 million</td>
<td>$38 million</td>
<td>$93 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>7,085</td>
<td>$168 million</td>
<td>$287 million</td>
<td>$56 million</td>
<td>$62 million</td>
<td>$16 million</td>
<td>$134 million</td>
<td>$231 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>739</td>
<td>$14 million</td>
<td>$20 million</td>
<td>$4 million</td>
<td>$1 million</td>
<td>$1 million</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
<td>$16 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,140</td>
<td>$263 million</td>
<td>$543 million</td>
<td>$83 million</td>
<td>$71 million</td>
<td>$144 million</td>
<td>$298 million</td>
<td>$460 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)GDPs = Gross Domestic Product; GSP = Gross State Product.
\(^b\)GSP less federal tax payments.
### Exhibit 2

Summary of the Annual Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Texas (Impacts as of 1996-1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Net of associated historic rehabilitation and heritage tourism spending.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Differences from indicated subtotals because of rounding.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>GDP = Gross Domestic Product; GSP = Gross State Product.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>GSP less federal tax payments.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### National Total Impacts (Direct and Multiplier)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Historic Rehabilitation</th>
<th>II. Heritage Tourism</th>
<th>III. Main Street Investment</th>
<th>IV. Spending by TX Museums</th>
<th>V. Total Examined Economic Impacts (Sum I–IV)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>8,142</td>
<td>58,637</td>
<td>4,141</td>
<td>2,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$251 million</td>
<td>$1,536 million</td>
<td>$113 million</td>
<td>$55 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP:</td>
<td>$346 million</td>
<td>$2,377 million</td>
<td>$171 million</td>
<td>$74 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes: Federal</td>
<td>$66 million</td>
<td>$452 million</td>
<td>$33 million</td>
<td>$14 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>$22 million</td>
<td>$150 million</td>
<td>$10 million</td>
<td>$5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>$18 million</td>
<td>$120 million</td>
<td>$8 million</td>
<td>$4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Totals*</td>
<td>$106 million</td>
<td>$722 million</td>
<td>$53 million</td>
<td>$23 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### In-State TX Total Impacts (Direct and Multiplier)

| Jobs                       | 4,247                | 32,647                      | 2,409                       | 1,383                                      | 40,685                                     |
| Income                    | $119 million         | $689 million                | $56 million                | $27 million                                | $890 million                               |
| GSP*                      | $165 million         | $1,185 million              | $88 million                | $34 million                                | $1,471 million                             |
| Taxes: Federal            | $31 million          | $225 million                | $17 million                | $7 million                                 | $279 million                               |
| State                     | $10 million          | $71 million                 | $5 million                 | $2 million                                 | $88 million                                |
| Local                     | $10 million          | $62 million                 | $5 million                 | $2 million                                 | $78 million                                |
| Tax Totals*               | $51 million          | $358 million                | $27 million                | $11 million                                | $445 million                               |
| In-State Wealth*          | $133 million         | $960 million                | $71 million                | $27 million                                | $1,192 million                             |
