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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
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President’s Report
Richard Moe ................................. 4

The Bidwell Training Center and Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild: Building an Environment that Nurture Hope
William E. Strickland, Jr. ......................... 11

The “Not So Big” Approach to Creating a Sense of Home
Sarah Susanka ........................................ 19

Values and Creativity in the Art of City Making
Charles Landry ....................................... 29

From Nicety to Necessity: Building Public Will for Preservation
Eric Friedenwald-Fishman ..................... 36

Cover photo:
Duquesne incline in Pittsburgh, Pa. Photo courtesy of the Pittsburgh Convention and Visitors Bureau.
President’s Report

Richard Moe

We meet in a city that is the very symbol of reinvention. For us, Pittsburgh is also a living laboratory—the place where preservation pioneers have developed and perfected many of the techniques that are now part of every preservationist’s toolkit. I encourage you to take full advantage of all that Pittsburgh has to offer—and to use what you learn here to make preservation work more effectively in your own hometown.

It’s particularly fitting that we’re in Pittsburgh this year, because this is the anniversary year for some of the most important legislative milestones in preservation history.

First, 2006 is the 100th anniversary of the Antiquities Act, which greatly expanded the federal role in preservation by authorizing the president to protect historic structures and archeological sites on federally owned land by designating them national monuments. Today we have extra reason to be grateful for this law in light of growing concern over the future of historic resources on our public lands. I’ll have more to say about this later.

Also marking an anniversary is the 1966 Department of Transportation Act. Section 4(f) of this Act is the strongest federal preservation law on the books. It has saved many historic sites from being paved over or otherwise harmed by transportation projects in the 40 years since it was enacted—and just last year, with your help, we fought successfully to keep these protections essentially intact.

The Tax Reform Act of 1976 is 30 years old this year. This first legislation to offer a federal income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic buildings didn’t generate much rehab activity—but it laid the groundwork for better incentives that have sparked billions of dollars in private-sector investment and returned thousands of historic buildings to productive use.

Finally, the National Historic Preservation Act marks its 40th anniversary in 2006. By establishing the National Register of Historic Places, creating the President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, mandating the appointment of state and tribal historic preservation officers, and setting up a system of federal grants to support their work, this law laid the foundation for much of our work in preservation today.

The people responsible for drafting and enacting these laws were giants. All of us who work in preservation today stand on their shoulders—which means we’re in an excellent position to continue the work they started.

And that’s exactly what we’ve been doing in the past year.

Hurricane Recovery Efforts

Our 2005 conference in Portland took place a month after Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast. I’d like to give you an update on what’s been accomplished there.

Even before the floodwaters receded, we made contact with some important allies: the state historic preservation offices in Louisiana and Mississippi, the statewide Mississippi Heritage Trust, and the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans. Out of our discussions came a decision to join forces in a three-pronged response:

• a media campaign to tell people about the importance of preserving the heritage and cultures that make the Gulf Coast region unique;
• a comprehensive hands-on effort to get information to homeowners, assess conditions, and develop effective on-the-ground responses; and
• a legislative agenda to provide the financial tools needed for recovery.

Very early on, we took the unprecedented step of establishing field offices on the Gulf Coast so that we could monitor developments more closely and deliver needed
Today our on-the-ground representatives in New Orleans and Mississippi are providing invaluable help to communities in need—and representing the National Trust in a way that should make all of us proud.

services more promptly. Today our on-the-ground representatives in New Orleans and Mississippi are providing invaluable help to communities in need—and representing the National Trust in a way that should make all of us proud.

To address our concern that damaged buildings might be demolished needlessly, we put out an urgent call for volunteers—and got an amazing response. Since last October we have had a volunteer team on the ground in New Orleans almost every week—an extraordinary effort that has involved nearly 1,000 people. Those with the necessary technical expertise have worked with FEMA, the SHPO, and the City to assess the structural condition of damaged buildings—and they’ve found that many of those previously slated for demolition can be saved. Volunteer architects and engineers have done walk-through inspections, giving homeowners advice and a written report prioritizing what needs to be done. Others have helped distribute tarps, buckets of cleaning materials, and thousands of packets of information on mold remediation and other procedures.

To assure homeowners that recovery is possible, we joined the Preservation Resource Center in a demonstration program called HOME AGAIN! New Orleans. Ten families in key areas are receiving grants and technical help to make their damaged homes livable again—and, as we hoped, their efforts are encouraging other homeowners.

Similar demonstration projects were launched in Mississippi, where we worked with the Mississippi Heritage Trust to place several structures back on their foundations and stabilize them. We’ve also targeted assistance to two significant historic houses: Beauvoir, the National Historic Landmark retirement home of Jefferson Davis in Biloxi, and the Charnley house, designed by famed architect Louis Sullivan in Ocean Springs.

Our Historic Hotels of America created a website to help find jobs for employees of HHA member hotels who had been displaced by the storm. Main Street programs all over the country “adopted” hard-hit communities in the Gulf Coast region, helping get revitalization efforts up and running again. The National Main Streets Conference brought 1,200 participants to New Orleans in June, so that one of the city’s first major post-Katrina conferences had a preservation theme. Our Communications Office has done a great job of keeping hurricane recovery in the public eye, especially through our website. And thanks to good work by our Membership and Development departments, contributions to our Hurricane Recovery Fund from foundations, corporations, and individuals will soon total nearly $2 million.

One of our biggest victories was the successful effort to secure hurricane recovery funding from Congress. We joined forces with public- and private-sector partners at the federal, state, and local levels and with thousands of individual preservationists all over America. Working together, we won $40 million in grant funds to help preserve storm-damaged historic properties and also a major expansion of rehab tax credits to provide incentives for rebuilding and revitalization. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana for their stalwart support.

I’ve always been enormously proud of the National Trust’s work in saving America’s heritage, but I’ve never been prouder than I am of our wide-ranging effort to ensure the preservation of the historic places and distinctive cultures of the Gulf Coast. It’s like nothing we’ve ever done before, and yet it’s precisely what we were created to do.

Protecting Neighborhoods and Public Lands

While hurricane recovery has kept us very busy, we’ve also been involved in other important issues during the year.

First, we’ve continued to focus attention on the nationwide problem of teardowns—the practice of buying an existing home for the purpose of tearing it down and replacing it with a bigger one that may be out of scale with its older neighbors. We’ve documented more than 300 communities in 33 states that are having problems with teardowns—including Kenilworth, III., which we put on our 2006 “11 Most Endangered” list because so many of its historic houses have been demolished.

In response, we’ve developed a “Teardown Resource Guide” and posted it on our website to help communities respond to the crisis. We’re also spreading the word that communities don’t have to sit back and take it—and they’re getting the message: Cities as diverse as Salt Lake City, Dallas, Atlanta, and Santa Monica have taken action in recent months to put the brakes on teardowns. We’ll keep developing other ways of dealing with this troubling—and growing—trend, which I believe poses the biggest threat to older neighborhoods since the heyday of urban renewal and interstate highway construction.

Another issue to which we’ve devoted much time and effort during the year is the threat to cultural resources on public lands. The federal Bureau of Land Management, or BLM, is responsible for 260 million acres of land that contains thousands of historic and cultural treasures, especially archeological evidence of the first Americans. The problem is that BLM has a bifurcated mission to both protect and exploit these resources, and has never had the funding and staff it needs to do its job well.

As a result, resources are being destroyed by vandalism, natural disasters, oil and gas exploration, and off-road vehicle use. Much BLM land hasn’t even been surveyed—and you can’t protect resources if you don’t even know what or where they are.

In May we issued a major report on this problem. It
in America, has been Acoma Sky City, the oldest continuously inhabited community in America, has been added to the National Trust’s collection of historic sites. Photo by James M. Vaughan.

highlights places such as Nine Mile Canyon in Utah, where ancient rock-art panels are threatened by mineral exploration that could turn what has been called “the world’s longest art gallery” into the world’s most culturally significant industrial zone, and Canyons of the Ancients National Monument in Colorado, where thousands of archeological sites are spread over 164,000 acres of rugged land—with one ranger to patrol them.

We’ve managed to focus significant media attention on this issue. We’re working with a great coalition, urging Congress to—among other things—give BLM the funding and staffing it needs, and secure statutory protection for the National Landscape Conservation System, which comprises the “crown jewels” of BLM’s holdings. While much of this land is in the West, it’s part of the heritage of all Americans—and all of us should be determined to see that it isn’t lost.

Successful Advocacy

We’ve won some significant advocacy victories in recent months. On the national level, we successfully fought off attempts to weaken Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which ensures that federal agencies fulfill their preservation responsibilities. We also worked hard to help Congress enact much-needed reforms to easements without destroying their effectiveness as a preservation tool.

Some of our most important advocacy efforts came at the state level. We all know that since 1976, the availability of federal tax credits for historic rehab has given an enormous boost to our efforts—stimulating more than $33 billion in private investment, spurring the rehab of more than 32,000 historic properties, and aiding the renovation or creation of some 300,000 housing units.

The success of the federal program has encouraged some states to adopt their own preservation incentives to complement the federal credits. We’re working to help other states take advantage of this great preservation tool—and we’re seeing results: In 1996 only 10 states had their own rehab tax credits in place; today that number has grown to 28 (29 as of January 2007).

In Missouri, the state’s rehab tax credit fuels $1 billion in economic activity every year and has created thousands of new jobs. In Florida, the state historic tax credit has returned two dollars in new revenues for each dollar of tax credit. Maryland’s tax credit sparked $800 million of investment between 1997 and 2003; economic analysis of 3 projects found that the net value of state and local revenues generated ranged as high as $50 for every dollar of tax credit awarded.

This is about more than putting new faces on old buildings—it’s also about sparking community pride, preserving desperately needed affordable housing stock, and strengthening a community’s economic base. We want what’s happened in 28 states to be duplicated in other states—and we’ll keep working toward that goal.

New National Trust Sites

In addition to the significant anniversaries I mentioned earlier, 2006 also marks the 50th anniversary of Decatur House as a National Trust historic site—the first in what has become a collection of 28 sites spanning the nation from California to Nantucket. In the past year, we’ve worked to implement a new vision for our sites.

Major restoration projects are bringing a “new/old” look to two of our sites, the Lincoln Cottage in Washington, D.C., and Montpelier in Virginia. The transformation is especially dramatic at Montpelier, where we’ve removed later additions in order to return the mansion to the appearance that James and Dolley Madison knew.

At two recently acquired sites, we’re making steady progress toward the long-awaited day when we can open the doors to the public. Our current plans are to welcome our first visitors this April to Philip Johnson’s iconic Glass House in New Canaan, Conn., and in spring 2008 to the marvelous Villa Finale in San Antonio, Tex.

At the 2003 conference in Denver, I announced that the Trust and the National Society of the Colonial Dames had entered into an interim partnership regarding the 1875 Hotel de Paris Museum in Georgetown, Colo. I am happy to report that the Dames have completed an ambitious endowment campaign that succeeded in raising more than $2 million in cash and pledges, and over the next few months we will develop a timetable for adding the Hotel de Paris to our historic site collection.

Finally, I want to give you advance notice of a very exciting development. After much thoughtful discussion, we have

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Our goal is to make the Trust the nation’s largest funder of preservation projects—and give preservation the reliable, sustainable source of funding that it needs and deserves.

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reached an agreement with the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico that will officially designate Acoma Sky City a National Trust historic site. Located on a 370-foot-high mesa, Acoma is the oldest continuously inhabited community in America. It comprises more than 300 structures, including the great mission church of San Esteban del Rey—but those numbers and words only hint at what a powerful and evocative place it is. We’ll be making a formal announcement in a few weeks, but in the meantime I know you share my excitement at this great opportunity for us to expand the public’s appreciation of our nation’s diverse heritage and to play a role in the preservation of one of America’s truly special places.

Building a Stronger Trust

We’ve accomplished a great deal over the past year, but—as is always the case in preservation—we still have much to do.

One of our biggest challenges is to continue our journey toward financial independence. As many of you will recall, not long ago we completed a highly successful national fundraising campaign—our very first—in which the generosity of members and friends like you played a major part. We always knew that our first campaign wouldn’t be our last, and we’re now investigating the feasibility of a new and very ambitious campaign to build a National Preservation Endowment. Our goal is to make the Trust the nation’s largest funder of preservation projects—and give preservation the reliable, sustainable source of funding that it needs and deserves.

Our Trustees haven’t formally committed to the campaign and details are still in development, but we expect that the fundraising goal could be in the range of $150 million to $250 million. Naturally, we’ll keep you informed as plans are refined and finalized—and when the time comes, we’ll look to you for the generous support you have always provided.

When I review the legislative milestones whose anniversaries we mark this year, one word keeps running through my mind: vision.

The people who wrote these groundbreaking laws had a clear and expansive vision of what preservation is all about. They believed that preservation is for everyone, that saving our heritage isn’t someone else’s job. They made us realize that our legacy from the past can—and should—play a meaningful role in present-day life. They opened our eyes to the fact that we need our history alive and close at hand where we can live with it, learn from it, and be inspired by it.

Their vision is alive in this hall, and in homes and classrooms and offices all over America. Their vision is ours now, and we’ll keep working to make it a reality.

Richard Moe is the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Bidwell Training Center and Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild: Building an Environment that Nurtures Hope

Life has a way of celebrating itself. Stanley Lowe [National Trust vice president, community revitalization] and I went to elementary school together. Arthur Zeigler [executive director, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation] and I became friends in the ’60s, and I later got to meet [National Trust president] Dick Moe. And they validated my work in the ’60s when it wasn’t popular to do so. When my arts program was in a row house in the middle of the inner city, working with poor kids during the riots—we call them “disturbances” these days, but back then we called them what they were, they were riots, and people were getting shot—I wanted to make some kind of a contribution to improving the condition of those folks in that community.

Arthur and Stanley helped me to understand that where I was, the place that I lived, had value and had validity. So I decided to cast my fate in the Manchester neighborhood of Pittsburgh, which is where I was born and where I’ll die. My entire life is six city blocks, for which I am very proud.

This is my autobiography without apology. I’ve only had two jobs my entire life. I run the center I’m going to talk about and I flew jets for an airline called Braniff.

My life was saved by a public school teacher named Frank Ross, who sadly was killed about three years before I built this center, but he lived long enough to see that I was going to be fine.

And this started as magic. I was walking down the hallway of Oliver High School where Stanley and I went. The art room door was open, and this guy was hunched over our one potter’s wheel making a great big bowl. I said, “What is that?” He said, “That’s called ceramics.” I said, “Well, I want you to teach me that.” So for the remaining two years of high school, I cut all my classes to do that, but I was smart enough to give the teachers whose classes I was cutting the
pottery I made. And they gave me passing grades and that’s how I got out of the place.

And Frank Ross said, “You’re too smart to die. I don’t want it on my conscience.” Frank drove me out to the University of Pittsburgh where he insisted I fill out a college application. No one had ever talked about college applications at our school. I didn’t do very well on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, so I was enrolled as a probationary student.

Well, I’m very pleased to tell you, I’m now a trustee of the University of Pittsburgh. I was the commencement speaker six years ago, speaking to 13,000 people, and I said, “Don’t give up on the poor kids. They might end up being the commencement speaker some day.”

The Power of Environment and Expectations

And basically that’s the story I’m going to tell you today. People are a function of validation and hope and expectations. And environment determines behavior. Now, as preservationists, you all know this probably better than any organized group in the United States because you have dedicated your lives and your principles to these concepts—and I am one of you.

The center started off in an old warehouse with holes in the floor and holes in the roof. It was called Bidwell Cultural and Training Center. I had started my little arts program in a row house, and these people had heard about me and asked me to take over Bidwell.

No windows, holes in the floor, the SWAT team was in and out of that place every week dragging guys to jail—and I decided that I was going to make my stand at Bidwell and take all the principles that I had learned in the arts and apply them to this place and see if we could bring a little life into that neighborhood.

The other thing that Mr. Ross did, he took a bunch of us high school kids to see Falling-water, just south of Pittsburgh. I was fascinated by the quality of the light that enveloped the house, and I said if I can get that light into my neighborhood, I’m halfway home. So I committed myself to building a “Frank Lloyd Wright” building before I died, and I did. I hired one of his students, who is in Pittsburgh, to build this center. Bidwell is the vocational school, Manchester is the arts program. And we built the center in the toughest neighborhood in Pittsburgh, with the highest crime rate—which is exactly where Stanley and Arthur thought that I needed to build this thing.

The worst part about being poor is what it does to your spirit. Poor people never have a nice day. They don’t even notice most of the time that the sun comes up. So my theory was that if you want to work with people who have been given up on by life, you have to look like the solution and not the problem.

So when the welfare mothers and the ex-steel workers come to my center along with the at-risk kids, the first thing they see in the springtime is a fountain that greets them at the front door. Because I’m in the attitude business—not just the training business. And people are a function of environment and expectations.

We’ve learned some fascinating sociology by creating this building in this neighborhood. We have fabulous artwork throughout the building. We have quilts and calligraphy, and everywhere your eye turns there’s something beautiful. That’s quite deliberate. People are a function of expectations and environment. If you surround them with beautiful things, they will have a tendency to look like the environment where they are. Now that’s not something I studied in sociology class. It’s something that I live every day of my life.

Pittsburgh is gray from November to May, for the most part. But even on a gray day, our building is flooded with sunlight because it’s mainly glass. The theory was that poor people are always in the dark in terms of their spirit, so we’ve got to get them out in the sunlight and let them know that the sun is for everybody on the planet.

In the old days, Bidwell used to teach building trades. And I hired a woodworker from Kyoto, Japan, to produce 60 pieces of furniture for our school. So the welfare mothers...
The Bidwell Training Center's vocational programs are supported by local industries with a need for skilled workers. Programs include training for chemical laboratory technicians, for pharmacy technicians and other medical specialists, and in culinary arts, horticulture, and office technology. Photo courtesy of Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

and the ex-steel workers and the at-risk kids come to a school where handcrafted furniture greets them every day—because I'm in the attitude business in addition to the training business.

We even have fresh flowers in the building everyday—not plastic. We have learned that people are a function of little things that you don't think amount to very much. Well, the flowers matter and they're in our building everyday of the week.

Connecting with Local Industries

There was a fellow that many of us loved, Senator John Heinz, who was one of the principal people who stood up to get this center built. I was called into John Heinz's office, which was like going to see the Wizard of Oz. He said, "You've done a great job on the north side and we understand that you want to build a new building," I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, you could really help the Heinz Company's affirmative actions goals out if you would add a food program to your new school when you get it built." Well, we were a buildings trades program back them—bricklaying and carpentry. And I said, "I'm reluctant to go into a field I don't know anything about, but I promise you if you'll help me get this center built, I'll come back in a couple of years and we'll get that food program going just like you asked."

And he said, "What would your answer be if I said I might be willing to consider a contribution of a million dollars?" I said, "Mr. Heinz, it looks like we're going into the food training business."

John did give us a million dollars, but just as importantly, he loaned us a researcher from the Heinz Company. We borrowed the curriculum from the Culinary Institute of America, and we created a gourmet cooks program. We built an amphitheatre for the students and we bring in chefs from all over the world to do presentations.

We discovered that if you build world-class facilities, people have a tendency to see themselves as the same. If you build prisons, they act like prisoners. It's a good illustration of what people are capable of, if you give them the tools and you give them the environment.

The fellow who ran Thrift Drug heard about the training programs for the Heinz Company. He said, "I'd like to get some of those qualified African Americans working for the Thrift Drug Pharmaceutical Company." I now train pharmacetical technicians for every hospital in Western Pennsylvania, and every retail pharmaceutical facility has students that have been trained at our school.

We also train chemical technicians. A research chemist from Beyer, which is here in Pittsburgh, rounded up Calgon Carbon, and BASF, and Fischer Scientific, and Nova Chemicals—and I now train technicians for every one of them. We have welfare mothers with no background in science doing analytical chemistry 10 months after enrollment in the program and using logarithmic calculators. And if people tell you that Americans cannot learn technology, particularly poor people, send them to Pittsburgh. We're doing it fine.

I also teach people how to read. We work with at-risk public school kids, 500 of them. They're all flunking out of public school for the most part, and we put them in clay, photography, and digital imaging. We graduated 90 percent of the kids and last year I put 90 percent of the kids in college—because we discovered there's nothing wrong with the kids that affection and good food and flowers and sunlight and a lot of clay can't cure. By treating these children as if they are the most valuable assets in life, they behave that way.

We now have graduates at the Rhode Island School of Design, and the Pratt Institute, and the Art Institute of Chicago. We have physicians, we have several PhDs. Eight of my faculty are former kids who went through the program, went to college, and are back teaching in the school that saved their lives. And we've come to the conclusion that there's nothing wrong with these kids that a good environment and enthusiasm can't cure.
Allies in the Arts
Every month I bring in the best nationally known artists in clay and visual arts to mentor these children. To exhibit the kids’ artwork, we have a museum-quality invitation printed up, and we’ve got their parents coming big time. Ten, fifteen years ago I couldn’t buy a parent. We had 200 parents show up at the last show, and we learned that black mothers and white mothers and Asian mothers and Hispanic mothers will go where their children are being nurtured.

I did a slide presentation at the Silicon Valley in California. Afterward, this lady came up from the audience and said, “That was a fabulous slide presentation. My only criticism is your computers are getting old.” Well, I’m not a high tech guy. They all look about the same to me. I said, “What do you do for a living?” She said, “I help run a company called Hewlett Packard.” I said, “My dear, there’s an instantaneous solution to this problem.”

The long and short of it is, HP adopted us to the tune of a million dollars and a systems engineer to go with it, and I now have one of the hippet digital imaging centers east of the Mississippi River, and I am putting kids into the Rhode Island School of Design right out of that imaging center.

I also had the presence of mind to stick a music hall in the north end of the building while I was building it. And I’m very glad I did, because Dizzy Gillespie showed up. And I said to Dizzy, “Why would you come to a black-run school in the middle of the inner city that doesn’t even have a reputation in music?” He said, “Because Billy Taylor told me a black guy built it and I didn’t believe him. And I’m very glad I showed up here. You’re too young to appreciate what I’ve seen. You ought to build one of these in every city in America, and I’m going to help you do it. I’m going to allow you to record my concert, and I’m going to give you the rights to the music,” which he did.

More musicians showed up, including Herbie Hancock, Nancy Wilson, Shirley Horn, Wynton Marsalis, and Betty Carter, and we now have 600 recordings. The most important collection of contemporary jazz recordings in the world is in my center ten minutes from where you’re sitting, and we’ve won three Grammy Awards for our recordings. We’ve now spun off our independent jazz label called MCG Jazz.

We sell out our concerts in subscription three weeks after the season is announced. And we’ve never had one act of vandalism or theft or drugs or alcohol in 23 years of operation on the north side of Pittsburgh. People will go there is celebration of life.

More Programs in Pittsburgh
I discovered I liked building buildings. There was a place that was burned out during the riots which I had to look at going to work everyday. I had the site cleared. In the middle of the site we built a 60,000-square-foot medical tech building. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center took half the building for their building operation. On the strength of the lease, I went out and borrowed the money and built the building, and we’ve never looked back. It’s full of tenants and does very well.

I built a 40,000-square-foot greenhouse next to my training center in the middle of the inner city. Now stores in the Giant Eagle and Whole Foods grocery chains are selling our orchids, and most of the high-end florists within Western Pennsylvania are buying our product. The point of the story is not to get rich growing orchids. It’s a diversified revenue platform, but more importantly I figured out that welfare moms need to grow orchids because it will bring them back to life.

The Orchid Society had its symposium at our center recently, and the welfare moms and the wealthy Orchid Society people were talking about orchids, and I said, “That’s the cure for the cancer.” You have to stop talking about poverty and start talking about orchids, and we can solve this thing.

Expanding Nationwide
When I was back in the Silicon Valley giving my slide show I met another person. This kid says, “Man, that was a
heck of a presentation.” I said, “Thanks, man. What do you do for a living?” He said, “Oh, I built a company called E-Bay.” I said, “Oh, that’s cool. You got a card?” I didn’t know E-Bay from a glass of water.

But there was something about the kid—so I came back to Pittsburgh and I asked one of the little techie kids in the imaging center, “What is E-Bay?” He said, “Oh, Mr. Strickland, that’s the electronic commerce network.” Later, I called him up and said, “Mr. Skoll, I’ve come to have much deeper appreciation of who you are.” Jeff Skoll laughed and said, “I thought you’d figure it out sooner or later.” And he said, “You are really on to something. Here’s a half a million bucks.” I said, “What’s that for?” He said, “Your first replication.”

We hired some guys from the Harvard Business School and we created a division called the National Center for Arts and Technology. These centers are now being built around the country: San Francisco, Cincinnati. At the Cincinnati Arts and Technology Center, we doubled the graduation rate in 12 months for black kids in the 12th grade in the Cincinnati Public School System. The newest one is now open in Grand Rapids, Mich. And New Orleans is now in the planning column.

**Partners for Change**

I want to thank you for allowing me to tell you this story for two reasons. One, I do want to change the world—yesterday, preferably. And I want to join a partnership with you guys to do it, because you’re the people who can get it done. You’ve got the values. You’ve got the vision. You’ve got the hope and you’ve the experience, and you never give up.

I am betting that you may be the only group that has enough value and enough vision and enough determination to join us in this cause to save our country, because ultimately that is what I think you are really talking about. I think you’re talking about saving buildings and land, but you are also talking about saving America—and I want to join you in that and make my contribution in the area of saving lives.

Number two, the reason I really do this is also very personal. The work I do is impossible. I make it look easy because that’s my job. But my mother left me with a gene before she died. It’s a gene that prevents me from blocking out suffering. And, unfortunately, at three o’clock in the morning I watch CNN, and see the flies on the mouths of the children in Africa and these kids eating out of garbage dumps in São Paulo and people sitting on the streets of New Orleans without a glass of water or a prayer, and I can’t block them out of my mind. So, from time to time, I suffer a kind of occupational depression.

But I have found the cure for it. If you make friends in every community where you go, particularly friends like you, the chances are that you won’t be lonely the next time you come back. So I’m glad to be here with you, and God bless you.

William E. Strickland, Jr., is president and CEO of the Manchester Bidwell Corporation in Pittsburgh (www.manchesterbidwell.org) and its subsidiaries the Bidwell Training Center and the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild. Strickland has been honored with numerous awards for his contributions to the arts and the community, including, in 1996, the MacArthur “Genius” Award.

**The “Not So Big” Approach to Creating a Sense of Home**

Sarah Susanka

This is a different audience than I usually get to speak to, so it’s exciting for me. And I think I have a message that many of you will find resonates with the kinds of work that you do.

I believe that all people, in their hearts, are searching for a sense of home. And there are a lot of people who really have no idea how to do that. They have a sense that there’s something missing in their lives, but they don’t really know how to make their house emulate what it is that they feel in their hearts.

Partly why I know something about this is that I grew up in England (I moved when I was 14), and I was surrounded by buildings that were hundreds of years old. It was part of what I grew up with, and that has a huge influence on how we experience where we come from.

One of my questions for you today is, What is it that makes something worth preserving? I’m going to start by focusing on what I believe we need to be doing for our children’s future, and what is going to make that legacy something that really feeds their spirits every day.

I know that the things that inspire me, especially when it comes to buildings, have to do with both beauty and inspiration. I find that I learn more about architecture from walking through a Frank Lloyd Wright house than from any number of lectures, because the vitality of the experience of moving through those spaces teaches me. That’s what people experience when they go through buildings that have that certain “something” that makes you think beyond the boundaries of what you normally think a building is.

I’m going to talk about what makes something beautiful, what makes something inspirational. That’s really the message that I’m sending out into the marketplace right now, where people are building bigger and bigger and bigger, and uglier and uglier and uglier houses.
We're all looking for “home” but we're searching with the wrong tool. We're searching with square footage, when home has almost nothing to do with size.

Using the Wrong Tools to Find “Home”

If you look at the real estate ads today, if you look at how we go about promoting what is a good house in the mass market, you'll see that there is an enormous emphasis on size. Bigger is most definitely better in that mass media world. And so when people come to a point in their lives when maybe they make more money, maybe they have a family and they need another house, their only vision is of something bigger. And the idea that quality might have something to do with your feeling comfortable just doesn't come into the picture.

We're all looking for “home” but we're searching with the wrong tool. We're searching with square footage, when home has almost nothing to do with size. It also has almost nothing to do with volume.

How many real estate ads do you see for cathedral ceilings and rooms touts as being better if they're very, very tall? The very tall room might be appropriate for a state capital, where you are intended to feel a sense of awe, but is that where you want to kick off your shoes and watch TV? It really isn’t.

Space has a very distinct effect on people and right now we don’t really understand it, as a culture. What we need in our houses is a sense of quality. Instead we're adding more and more quantity in an effort to find that elusive sense of home.

Another problem comes from designing two dimensionally. When you drive down many suburban streets, you'll see that somebody at least tried to design the front of the house, but you go around the side and it's vinyl siding, and the back is probably worse than the sides. Most don’t even have windows on the side. For most people, this design approach does not feel like it has any integrity. There's no sense of a whole. It's just piecemeal. So then we become frustrated by what suburbia looks like.

It's incumbent upon our profession to really help connect the dots and explain that there is an alternative to this cookie-cutter mentality of building one house after another with just minor variations and only the front designed.

And then there are the teardowns. In every city I go to people are contending with teardowns, and there aren’t good solutions. The interesting thing is that when some-body tears a house down and puts up a “Starter Castle,” a “McMansion,” they don’t realize often what they’re doing. They don’t intend to make something really ugly in an otherwise quite nice neighborhood. Instead they're just picking a plan, probably from one of those magazines at the grocery store, and saying to a builder, “I want this on this lot.”

It's ignorance. It's not an intentional destruction of something that we value. They want to be in this neighborhood because they like the neighborhood. A huge amount of education is needed to help connect the dots and help people to understand how to be a good neighbor—how to design in the milieu of what is already there.

And then there's how we go about building a new neighborhood. Every time there is a new development, the first thing that happens is that all of the vegetation that would have made it a neighborhood gets taken down. So now we have to wait 60 years for the feeling of neighborhood to return. And granted, it's more efficient. Granted, you build more, faster—but does this really appeal to the future homeowners? They're not going to be around by the time the neighborhood really starts to be a place that has that vitality that comes from having some vegetation around.

The Need to Show Another Way

So there's an awful lot missing in how we're going about building. I believe we have an ethical duty to help people understand there is another way. We need to give the guy who is developing this land another option, another series of options, that can actually help him make more money, not less—since there's always the fear that if I do something different I'm going to lose my shirt. It certainly doesn’t have to be that way, and more and more projects around the country are now proving that to be the case.

So in a nutshell, my book The Not So Big House was saying, hey, we've got a problem. The American house is in need of some serious help, so how do we go about providing that? How do we design it differently?

When I first hung out a shingle as an architect in 1983, I discovered that our biggest problem as a profession was that people perceived architects as visionaries and capable of designing things that were...
If a house is beautiful as well as useful, people look after it automatically because they fall in love with it. So beauty is an incredibly important part of preservation.

unique and avant-garde. But most would never think of asking a residential architect to design their house. Why? Because they figured they would get something that’s a work of art but not very useful as far as living is concerned. And unfortunately, our architectural press has, until very recently, tended to promote only the avant-garde, so that we haven’t been aware, as a culture, that architects design a very wide variety of types of structures. And so I very intentionally picked images for my books that show houses that really look like a house.

We have to help people find that sense of home in structures that are more like what we saw in the Arts and Crafts movement. There was a tremendous movement with Gustav Stickley, with The Craftsman magazine, to bring good design into the hands of the average homeowner. And look at the legacy that it left. Bungalows across the country are now worth vastly more per square foot than neighboring houses that haven’t got those small details that really make the house sing—and they’re being lovingly preserved.

If a house is beautiful as well as useful, people look after it automatically because they fall in love with it. So beauty is an incredibly important part of preservation.

So why did I end up writing a book? I had been talking to new home clients and remodeling clients for, at that time, about 15 years, and I had to go through the same sequence of ideas with every client. They would often come in thinking that they could afford a lot more space than they really could, given the pictures that they were showing me.

I had to help them see that you can have quality, quantity, and cost as the three variables, and you can hold any two of them but you’ve got to let the third one float. For example, if you know you want a certain quantity of space and you know you’ve got a certain amount of money, the quality will have to float. That means it will probably have to go down as things prove to be more expensive than you thought. Or you can hold the quality level the same for the same cost and let the quantity float.

You need to help people understand that you can take some square footage out of what you thought you needed and have a house that’s going to be at least as large as you wanted, but in a different way. It’s about reapportioning dollars out of square footage and into the things that really matter. My sound bite on radio is often, “The Not So Big House is about a third smaller than you thought you needed but just as expensive.”

And people get it. They realize they will have a house that’s wonderful in a completely different way, but the “more-ness” that it contains is not size, it’s the quality and the inspiration it offers for living. These are the basic messages in The Not So Big House: Build better not bigger. Build to last. Design using all three dimensions.

Designing for How We Really Live

We might live in a house today that has a formal living room and dining room, a butler’s pantry, and kitchen. But where are we mostly living? In the kitchen. The butler’s pantry was originally intended to keep the kitchen smells away from the main living space, the maid was ensconced in the kitchen, and everybody else was in the living room and dining room—but that’s not how we live today. So it doesn’t make sense anymore, and those houses, lovely as they may be, need to be revamped for how we are actually living.

If you eliminate the rooms you rarely use—and in many families it’s definitely the formal living, sometimes the formal dining room, definitely the foyer—and take the dollars out of those spaces and put them instead into the rooms you live in every day and make those wonderful, then you’ve got a house that actually works with you rather than against you.

Now I’m not trying to talk anybody out of rooms they use. If you use your formal living room, if you use your formal dining room, by all means build them. But I discovered that more than 85 percent of my clients never used their formal living room if they had a family room. That’s an enormous number.

When I built a house for myself in St. Paul, my banker looked at the plans and said, “I’m sorry. We can’t lend you money. You don’t have a formal living room or a formal dining room.” And I asked him, “How often do you use your formal living room?” And he said, “I’ve never sat in my formal living room.” And I had an instant convert. He got it immediately, and he helped me to make this model for what has become an idea that a lot of people have now
been able to embrace.

I wrote this book because I couldn’t get that change to happen unless I could get a groundswell of people saying, “Yeah, me too. I want one of those.” And although I tried to work with bankers and with appraisers prior to writing this book, it became clear that these professionals were telling Joe Q. Public what he needed for resale. But nobody was listening to Joe Q. Public say, but I don’t use those rooms anymore.

So the book was a way to connect the dots and get people to hear what’s really going on behind the scenes. That’s the role of an architect. Architects have to look at how we are really living. What are the patterns, and then how do we support those patterns of living with our structures? It’s no wonder that our houses need updating, but rather than just adding these pods of space onto an antiquated plan, we need to rethink the whole. And that’s what this is really about.

Creating Inspiring Spaces

We also need to design and build space that inspires us every day. I can’t tell you how many people I’ve talked to who are literally terrified of personalizing, because they are afraid, once again, of that resale boogy. If you do something personal, the fear is nobody else will want it. Well, it’s quite the reverse. Yes, you can do things that will make somebody else not want the house, but the vast majority of things that we do to imprint ourselves upon our homes are the things that others will like too. And so rather than build on this fear, it’s really important to get people to embrace the thing that they want to do and to start making their houses their own.

And the secret is that if we do that, we tend to stay in our houses, because the house is reflecting us back to us, and that’s what we really want. That’s what gives us a sense of home.

And then there’s another subplot about building for community and building for livability. The house is one thing. The community is an incredibly important part of where that house sits, and if you can design both house and community to support that sense of inspiration so that everybody who lives there really feels engaged in something bigger than themselves, it’s a very wonderful experience.

Designing for a Human Scale

Perhaps the most important message of the whole book is to design in proportion with our human scale. The thing that has happened is that we are designing houses for Brobdingnagians, if you are familiar with Gulliver’s Travels—you know, the huge giants. We’re not that size. We come in fairly standard packages.

If you design for that human scale, and you understand that what we are attempting to do in our homes, most typically, is feel comfortable, feel at home, then the whole goal around design is very, very different than trying to knock the socks off the people who walk through the front door. You may want to do that, but then recognize that that’s what you’re doing with the 18-foot-high foyer.

Designing in Three Dimensions

The vast majority of people, although we live in a three-dimensional world, are primarily only aware of two dimensions and how the two dimensions affect them.

Take yourself back in your memory to when you were a child, and remember how you took up residence in some cozy place. For me, it was the cupboard under the stairs in my house in England. My grandmother’s laundry basket also had a great attraction because I could put it over me like a cage and look out. Each of you has that kind of memory.

Now I want you to recognize that that experience was a spatial one. A huge part of our population is extremely sensitive to space, but because we have no language to describe it to one another, we don’t know how important it is. Although we’re living in three dimensions, we don’t realize it and so we end up designing in two.

A metaphor gets this across the best. If you think of a map of a city, what does that map tell you? It tells you how to get your car from one place to another. And if we had a closer-in city map, we would be able to tell where different buildings were. But we never would imagine that a map would tell us what that city was going to feel like.

Well, guess what? That’s what a floor plan is. A floor plan tells us only two dimensions of information. It tells you whether your couch will fit. It tells you how to get from the kitchen to the living room. But it doesn’t tell you how it’s going to feel. For that feeling,
you must have information about the third dimension, the heights of everything and how all of those interior elevations within the house are going to look. Now that may seem obvious to many of you in this audience, but it is an absolute revelation to 99 percent of the population.

I wondered, as I was practicing architecture, why, over and over again, people would pick a floor plan then hire a builder and give it no more thought than buying a toaster, and build it, and be disappointed. I finally asked one of my neighbors who had just gone through this endeavor why she’d gone about the process the way she did. And she said, “Is there another way?” And then I discovered that the idea that height makes a difference to the experience of the space was a revelation to her. And then gradually I discovered, it’s very, very common.

This spatial sense explains why a lot of people have an instant love of window seats. If you’re sitting in that window seat, it’s your territory. It’s the adult’s version of the cardboard box. We’re physiologically programmed to look for territory that can be ours. I call this idea shelter around activity. It’s a way of sheltering the thing that you’re doing so that you feel at home when you’re doing it there. It doesn’t mean enclosed. It doesn’t mean tiny. It just means that it’s a part of a larger thing but it’s differentiated from that larger thing.

When I design show houses, I often use an eight-foot ceiling as the tallest space just to show that eight feet doesn’t have to be boring. It’s just that when you have all eight feet it’s boring. It’s true if you’ve got all nine or all ten feet. It’s the variations that make us feel alive. So by lowering a ceiling over a window seat, by lowering a ceiling (we call it a soffit) over the bed, you get a sense of shelter around each activity, and it makes the whole room vastly more interesting than if it were just all extruded up.

The master at this was Frank Lloyd Wright. And a lot of what I have learned has come from understanding some of the great masters of architecture. He used ceiling height in a wonderful way to differentiate place from place. Many of our national treasures, the old homes that have been so beautifully designed, can really teach us to appreciate that third dimension.

The Not So Big Life
So how is it that we have these enormous structures marching across our prairies and fields and hillsides these days? Do you have the sense, as I do, that there’s some void we’re trying to fill with all this space?

I’m in the process right now of finishing a book that is a deviation from where I’ve gone. It’s not about architecture, it’s about how we live our lives. It’s going to be called The Not So Big Life: Making Room for What Really Matters. And I mention it because I believe that what you all are dealing with is not just about preserving our history but about making places that are vital for the living of everyday life. And so I want to give you a sense of how this book can tie into a lot of what you are working with every day.

We are consuming voraciously. But why? Well, I believe we all have this sense of something missing in our lives. So many of us are in the fast lane that we don’t even have time to stop and wonder, is that what I really want? So you move from a 2,000-square-foot house to a 5,000-square-foot house to a 10,000-square-foot house and you just keep on getting bigger. But is there something that we’re trying to do with all of that acquisition?

We’re also confronted with an epidemic of multitasking, of over-working, and under-sleeping. And in the midst of all that, the meaningfulness of everyday life is getting lost.

We’re building more and more space, and consuming and consuming more and more stuff—but our stuff is running us. I can’t tell you how many clients I’ve had whose entertainment on the weekends, when they’ve got finally enough time to do something other than work, is to shop. And then you bring the stuff home and you don’t have any place to put it. So then you hire an architect to build an addition.

We are trying to fill this void inside ourselves with all that stuff and with all the size. So really the “Not So Big House” is just a small part of a much bigger issue, which is confronting all of us, about how do we find meaning in our own lives.

We’re looking for a life remodeling. It doesn’t take big changes, but it takes an awareness of what it is we’re doing. So where I’ve talked about space in that third dimension, now we’re moving to the next dimension—to time and how we engage time.

Our homes are really the
When we preserve anything, we preserve what inspires us and makes us feel alive.
So my pitch is, let’s make more things that inspire us

place that can provide that foundation for a more balanced way of living. I want to start helping people to see how important it is that the places they surround themselves with have a sense of beauty that inspires them, so that they can start to live more of who they really are.

And our communities, in the same way, can help do exactly the same thing. When we start to build communities as places where you can engage your neighbor in something that is more than passing each other and waving in the car, that’s when we’ll start to create balance in our lives.

It’s about ourselves and how we engage in everything we do every day. When we are going so fast, we don’t have time to really appreciate what it is that we have—this gift of being alive.

When we preserve anything, we preserve what inspires us and makes us feel alive. So my pitch is, let’s make more things that inspire us, because preservation isn’t really about the past. It’s about feeling the vitality of those beautiful things today. That’s what I experienced when I grew up in England and it’s what we have the capability of doing in this country. All too often, because we’re so busy looking at the future, we don’t recognize what we can be building right now.

Everyone is looking for home and for a way to make room for what really does matter in their lives. And it’s about inspiration for everyday living, whether that’s a historical structure, whether it’s a house being built today, whether it’s remodeling of an existing house. It’s all the same issue. And we all have a part to play in making that beauty come into being. That’s truly timeless design, and it is what people long for.

I hope that some of these ideas have inspired you to go back and help to bring more of that into being in your communities and in your organizations. To create a world worth preserving, we have to start with the way we’re living today, the way we’re designing today, and the world, quite literally, is in our hands.

Sarah Susanka, AIA, is the best-selling author of The Not So Big House (1998). Creating the Not So Big House (2000), Inside the Not So Big House (2005), and others. Learn more about her work and the Not So Big approach at www.notsobighouse.com/index.asp.

Values and Creativity in the Art of City Making

Charles Landry

The thing that I’m most interested in at the moment is the notion of values and valuing—and how one incorporates values into cities. As we all know, many of the cities we have are great disappointments. The way we treat our cities—you can really see it when you walk around in them—reflects our own state of mind and, of course, the ethical values that we bring into the places we construct around us.

Quite often people now use words like “human capital,” “social capital,” “cultural capital,” etc. I think all of these forms of capital are incredibly important when we judge the fate and the well-being of a place and a city. Obviously financial capital is only one aspect of it.

But I would like to shift the balance from the notion of capital, which is often about cost, to what is the value of things. We’ve got lots of types of value. Obviously, the exchange value of things, how useful it is, the social value, the environmental value, image value, etc. But perhaps most interesting for me is the whole notion of the cultural and historical values. And if we could make that shift, I think the places we see and live in would look completely different.

Heritage and Creativity

In my work, I’m associated with talking about creativity, and I think heritage and creativity are wonderful partners. They’re usually seen, rather stupidly in my view, as on opposite sides of the fence. As you well know, imagination is just as much in the historical fabric. That’s why we’ve often maintained the historical fabric in the changes we make today.

And in essence, the creativity part is, how can we find the conditions within which we all can think, plan, and act with imagination? And how can we imbue a culture of imagination into the way a place functions and how is it able, for example, to combine the old and the new simultaneously?
Today’s classic—today’s thing that we treasure so much—was often yesterday’s innovation. So really there is a sort of sisterhood or brotherhood between innovation, creativity, and our desire to preserve things.

Quite often, that requires rethinking the rules system. Often when people talk about a vision of a place, they start off by asking, “What are the rules?” and then adjusting the vision to the existing rules, rather than saying, “Can we re-imagine the rules to fit in the possible vision that we may have?”

One of the problems with all of this, of course, is that we approach problems—and this is why for me the notion of the creative city is so important—with a mindset that is usually etched in stone, with our settled prejudices. There’s nothing wrong with having settled thoughts. But obviously that mindset, which locks us into certain sorts of patterns, needs on occasion to be rethought, and rethought quite dramatically. Often these mindsets make us act like a tribe just following the leader, or following the other, without really considering the broader possibilities of any situation.

One of the phrases I sometimes use is, Today’s classic—today’s thing that we treasure so much—was often yesterday’s innovation. So really there is a sort of sisterhood or brotherhood between innovation, creativity, and our desire to preserve things.

For example, look at Venice. Venice wasn’t built and thought through in a business-as-usual approach. It was an incredibly bold and innovative way of thinking about how you could make, shape, and create a city to deal with the purposes of trade. So what we see in so much of the past is, of course, the intense innovative capacity.

And the same holds true today. When we’re thinking about the future or the past, quite often—even when you’re thinking about change—it’s useful to have the culture. When you look at countries and places that change well, usually they go with the grain of their culture, which then acts as a backbone that makes change easier rather than acting as a shield. So these are sort of strange and interesting twin partners—culture and innovation, heritage and creativity.

To take an example, if we look at the old workshops of the world, and think through the new workshops of the world where leading-edge experiments are taking place, often they’re located precisely in these older industrial structures. Because the pattern of age is etched into them, it gives some sort of inspiration for the future.

But let’s now move on and look at the shape of things to come. Let’s talk about cities as they are, and what they do to us, and how they do it to us.

The Legacy of “Silo” Thinking

Let’s consider what, if anything, we would have done differently now if we had another hundred years to think, and what was done back then. I think one of the key features about cities is we’re trying to keep the intimacy of the smaller place with the cosmopolitan twist and the stimulation of the bigger place. One of the central challenges for every city is to be both stimulating and at the same time have that sense of refuge.

But what we thought of back then was very much about reducing things into their fragments and their parts, which is usually seen as the “silo mentality”—the mentality of having everything in its little box and isolated. And this sort of approach, this organization culture, is one of the greatest problems in creating great cities today. That silo mentality, that lack of having insights from other disciplines, simply doesn’t deal with the problems confronting cities today.

What tends to happen is that we look at the urban elements and usually we start off with the hardware. Then afterward, not quite as an afterthought, we think of the people, which I’ll call the software. What needs to happen is a shift from hardware thinking to software thinking—because, of course, the city is greater than the sum of its parts. The architect might look at the building. The person in human services might just look at the people on the ground. The engineer—and I’m stereotyping, of course—will look at the crane, and the traffic engineer is only interested in the traffic lights and the stuff that happens near the lights, and the urban designer may claim to be looking at everything. But this is the issue that I’m addressing—this capacity to look at things together, to see the forest and the trees simultaneously.

Now the reason why I think we need to do that is, the world has changed inordinately. And for many people, it feels like complete chaos. And those changes are, of course, sometimes frightening.

There is a problem about erasing memory. Consider the Berlin Wall. They tore the wall down with the speed of light, and people keep on
saying. Why didn’t you keep
more of the wall, bits of it?
Why didn’t you build the
new buildings around, over,
through, above, under the wall
rather than keeping one
“museum-ized” piece as the
wall? What a failure. Most
people knew it even then. The
Berliners knew it, but someone
just went a bit mad.

That notion of erasing
memory is really doing us
harm. And in a sense, the loss
of memory is also the loss of
sanity. And that may sound
heavy, but unless we can see
the pattern over ages, etched
through the physical structures
and the places we live and
work in, I just don’t know
what it’s all worth.

Within that, what we’re
really talking about is distinct-
tiveness. And the distinctive-
ness not of McDonald’s, of
which there are 32,000—
which if you lined them next
to each other would go from
London to Glasgow (which
would be a horror trip if you
did that journey, but quite
interesting in a sort of a post-
modern way). But because
cars and roads have come to
dominate, that’s what makes
these chains like McDonald’s
work. That’s a big long con-
versation, another lecture.
But basically, this dependence
on the car is part of what is
causing the death of the main
streets we love.

I’m also concerned that
everything is happening quicker,
as you know. Shops are even
called Quick. Quick restaur-
ants. Speed. Information
overload. In all of that, the
issues that we need to discuss,
which are so important, we
cannot ever consider if the
world is moving so speedily.

So we need to drag out
the old thinking about how
we shape and create our cities,
and get out of the boxes we’re in,
which are often professional
boxes—get out of that silo
mentality. Think differently,
because perhaps thinking dif-
frently leads us to do things
differently and to do com-
pletely different things. That
implies reassessing what plan-
nings is about, and bringing
the parts and the whole
together simultaneously. It
implies having policy hand-
shakes, handshakes between
disciplines that don’t normally
come together.

What about the policy
handshake between food and
crime? I bet the person re-
sponsible for food in Pittsburgh
is not connected to the person
who thinks of crime. The re-
lationship between good food
and reduction in violence is
absolutely clear—but we live
in our islands, our silos.

So making the places we
want requires policy hand-
shakes afresh. That’s because
city making is not just some-
thing that happens by chance.
It’s really to do with how we
think about things.

Creating Cities with
Meaning

Now the greatest challenge
is really the crisis of meaning
and experience in our cities.
We need to give the places we
live in that sense of meaning.

Great places now have a
different sort of priorities, and
different ways of competing.
There’s eco-awareness, cultural
awareness, urbanity. It’s about
how you keep your talent.
That’s very different from the
old days, when you kept your
talent because you had a factory.
So understanding the way the
atmospheres now work is
absolutely important. You can
already see that I am getting
into language that is emotional.

The great shifts that are
required call for cultural liter-
cy. That sense of being willing
to rethink. That understand-
ing of the difference between
the complicated and the com-
plex. Complicated things are
like going to the moon. You
do it in the end. It’s very logi-
cal. Complex things are like
bringing up a child. It’s rela-
tional. You change. It changes
as you interact with it. It is a
completely different way of
thinking. But that’s the world
we’re in.

The other blind spots in
city making are these things
like emotions. I’ve never been
to a planning meeting in my
life where there’s been an
environmental psychologist
who knew how buildings affect
my brain, or someone who
loves emotions. Have you ever
seen a planning document
that says something like “love”
in it instead of “bypass” (as in
road bypass)?

Even though we’re global,
we are still very interested in
belonging. We need to identify.
We need a foundation some-
where, even though we’re
traveling and moving around
very quickly. We need to feel
that there are deeper layers of
history around and that we’re
not just operating in a shallow
register.

We need to see that her-
itage isn’t only about the past.
That it’s happening and being
re-created as we move forward.

For instance, all the time,
like the famous WaterFire event
in Providence, R.I. I want to get
rid of the notion that tradition
is from one point on and then,
after that, it was always there.
We’re actually creating tradi-

We need to see that
eritage isn’t only about the past.
That it’s happening and being
re-created as we move forward.
We need to bring together the insights of the different types of people. We need to find a way of thinking ahead, not just about, say, is there parking?, but is there a sense of seeing the past, present, and the future?

Creating Cities that Give to the World

What I’m really saying is, how can our city become the most creative place for the world? What is the city giving back? That does not mean becoming the most creative place in the world that is ego-driven and dull, that just says, “Yes, we’re very good. We’ve got lots of tourists,” and all of that. But always to ask the question, what is my city doing for the world?

I think Vancouver is somewhat for the world. It had a plan, and people often think of Vancouver as one of the great places that was strategically principled but within it was a flexibility in implementation. And what you get within that principle is the notion of mixed use—the lack of which has been destroying so many cities. That mixed use has enabled Vancouver to have both that skyscraper-y feel and that intimate feel. (I’m not pretending it’s perfect. No city is perfect.)

There’s Barcelona, which many people talk about. The thing I like most about Barcelona is that the city has a sense of democratic urbanity, of creating many spaces for conviviality which encourage people to meet. These micro-spaces are often leftover detritus that are then turned into someplace where I might have a conversation—and that is the essence of urbanity. Even within these micro-spaces there’s an element of the family-friendly city. (The problem with Barcelona, as with so many other places, is there are too many tourists coming, which is destroying the city. Sometimes you feel that perhaps things should be emptier.)

And I think the Slow Cities Movement is interesting, deriving, as you know, from the Slow Food Movement. It began when the first McDonald’s opened in Rome. Its founder, Carlo Petrini, said: I’m not having fast food; I’m having slow food, i.e., food which I understand I can cook, which I know where it comes from. So we want to create also slow cities where we understand the fabric—which is very much in the minds of preservationists—of how things came to be. And the Slow Cities Movement, which has 77 member cities in Italy, is all about using typical local products, all the sort of stuff, when we think back, we really want to still have. And these cities are not backward-looking and nostalgic. They’re forward-looking and trying to re-create a sense of uniqueness.

The Art of City Making

So what do conservationists, preservationists, and artists contribute to this thing finally? We need to bring together the insights of the different types of people. We need to find a way of thinking ahead, not just about, say, is there parking?, but is there a sense of seeing the past, present, and the future? We need to see clearly that a city is more than things like roads and pipes.

One really needs to do these policy handshakes—for example, linking with public health, which means creating walkable cities, because the link between car-created cities and obesity is well-established. It’s all about the art of bringing the things that are in these different boxes together. That isn’t to decry that each one of us has a specialty, but it’s about crossing the boundary of our specialization—because the problems we’re trying to solve may be at the edge, not the center, of our own concerns.

So great city making is about the art of crossing the boundaries. There are the notions of distinctiveness, of not erasing memory, of getting people motivated to be behind things, and of being innovative as well. And in the end, it’s really about, occasionally, allowing that transgressive-ness to happen, and to encourage the sort of living that most people say they want when you ask them.

We know, of course, there are political priorities, but that’s not new. We need to find a way that we can discuss this together so the limited budgets can be sorted out. And we need to combine, as I said before, hardware and software thinking in a way that makes more—that makes one plus one equal three.

And, ultimately, it is about the art of telling an urban story. What is my story? Where am I going? What myths will I keep? What myths will I forget? What will I remember?

Civic creativity is the art of the public sector being more entrepreneurial within accountability principles, and the private sector more concerned with the public good. That’s what then adds value in an economic sense and an ethical value simultaneously. So it’s about the art of alignment. This is the way I think of seeing the city as a living work of art.

And finally, it’s about reminding ourselves that there are ordinary leaders, innovative leaders, and visionary leaders. The ordinary leader is this person with his head down who follows what the trend is. We want more car parking. Yes, I will provide you more car parking. The innovative leader is the person who brings a couple of elements together which are different than before. The visionary leader is the person who tells a story of the making, shaping, and the re-creation of the city you are in, where you want to become an active agent and participant.

From Nicety to Necessity: Building Public Will for Preservation

Eric Friedenwald-Fishman

What is the problem? Why are we here? What I’m seeing around the country and what I hear from my colleagues who work for local, state, and national preservation organizations is that many of us are encountering that preservation is viewed by many Americans as a nicety rather than a necessity.

So what are the current frames that we’re using and hearing about preservation? What are we hearing as we talk to members of our legislature, members of our city council, members of our congressional delegation, foundation funders? When I testify to legislatures or commissions I often hear the legislator or county commissioner saying: “Don’t get me wrong, I’m all for historic preservation. But we have more important things to fund like police and fire and public health.”

What are some of the other things we hear about preservation? It’s expensive and doesn’t make money. It’s elitist; you’re only preserving dead white guy’s houses. It’s not a voter priority or a constituent priority. It blocks development.

It’s used for dodging taxes. It’s part of gentrification, and it raises the rents. It goes against property rights. They’re just old buildings.

If this is what we’re hearing as we’re out seeking funding, seeking policy change, seeking support for our projects, what’s the solution? To counter this set of existing frames we need to reframe how we position preservation; we need to reframe preservation as a priority need that makes individuals, organizations, and communities stronger. And from a tactical standpoint, we need to create relevancy and ownership for this new frame. Then we have the greatest impact for developing the message that will be effective and determining the delivery vehicles that will be effective.

We need to understand the underlying existing values that audiences hold and to which we can link so those audiences make choices for us.

Identifying the Audiences

The most important strategy is to invest in audience understanding. We need to understand the underlying existing values that audiences hold and to which we can link so those audiences make choices for us.

Segmentation and Prioritization

If we had infinite resources and infinite time we could indeed effectively communicate with every single American, but we don’t. So to create change it’s very important that we focus on which segments of the community are going to have the greatest opportunity to create change for the issue that we’re working on. (The key word here is “first” because I believe eventually all segments of the community do make a difference.)

It is important that we segment and prioritize our audiences in the following terms: Who has the ability to take the immediate action that we are looking for; who has the ability to influence those who are going to be able to take the immediate action; who are the audiences with whom we have the greatest connection and pathway; and who are the audiences with whom we do not have existing strong pathways but who can create the greatest impact for the change that we want? Identifying and prioritizing the audiences can then help us in developing the messages that will be effective and determining the delivery vehicles that will be effective.

For example, a lot of preservation groups across the country are saying we need to diversify our audience, but our A-1 priority is going to be the baby boomer generation. Although they now are not the majority of our members, baby boomers are the most powerful force in terms of advocacy, and they may soon be the most powerful force in terms of potential donor dollars and membership dollars.

My point isn’t to tell you who you need to prioritize. My
point is to say that, to begin with, we want to see how can we divide the audience, because it’s easier to reach them that way.

**Influence Mapping**

A lot of times in marketing work, people do a good job of segmenting and prioritizing their audience and then jump immediately into saying, now how do I get the message out to that audience?

But it is worth taking an additional step to do influence mapping—to look at that set of prioritized audiences and ask the questions: Who are the trusted advisors for that set of audiences? What are the mediums through which these audiences already get their information? What channels can we use that influence these audiences? For example, there are many projects where we will find that the business community can’t make the decision that we need to have made, but that the business community is in many ways the most influential audience in terms of being able to influence the decision-makers we need.

**Needs Identification**

Once we’ve prioritized audiences and done our influence mapping, it’s then very important that we understand the needs that these people have.

Let me explain the difference between a need and a value. A need in a lot of communities is economic development. “We need more store fronts that are leased out than are sitting vacant.” Or, “We need more family wage jobs in our community.” Family wage jobs are not a value. Economic development is not a value, but it’s an absolute direct community or human need. Now, there are underlying values that can connect to those needs—fair opportunity, prosperity—but we’ll talk about those later.

For example, when I’m lobbying the legislature, I know that a need of my primary audience is getting reelected. So I’m going to make the effort to identify and map every preservation project that’s been done in the legislators’ districts. I also identify three or four of their major donors who are involved in preservation projects in their community who’ll they need to get campaign contributions from again. And I’m going to design my presentation to emphasize the interests of major donors and other constituents, more than talking about the incredible value of this particular covered bridge or that particular old school house.

What are some of the needs we encounter in the preservation community? Developers need to make a profit. Communities need economic development. So we talk about preservation serving their need of providing an economic development catalyst to transform a main street or a community, to bring more family-wage jobs into an area, to create space that can be an incubator for new businesses.

I actually see very few advocacy materials for preservation that don’t do a good job of communicating about the needs—talking about the economic impact, about how many units of housing have been sparked, about the multiplier of the resources that are expended. We have to be aware of those needs, and we have to design our messages to show that we understand those needs and can address them—but we also have to understand and talk about our audiences’ values.

**Values Identification**

Let’s look at likely voters, because likely voters are a really powerful constituency in this country for preservation if you want to influence local legislation. Let me give you some examples of closely held values that have influenced campaigns for other issues—values that we see come up again and again with voters—and look at which of those may have a strong correlation with preservation.

One of them is the desire for prosperity and opportunity. That is a closely held value for virtually every American, regardless of class, ethnicity, or generation. It’s something that we don’t see that much of in the way that we communicate about preservation. When we talk about all the economic development impact, that’s more about addressing a broader community need. But we have the chance to touch a closely held personal value in terms of people’s interest and desire to have equal opportunity and to have the ability to create prosperity.

There’s sense of belonging, sense of community, sense of identity. We can see this value when it gets wrapped in the idea of patriotism, when we look at the incredible investment voters are willing to make to bring the Olympics or other major events to a community. Look at great values-based positioning that professional sports franchises, which are big private businesses, have done in garnering
significant amounts of tax dollars based upon both a civic pride and local identity frame. This is a closely held value that could have huge strength and relevancy for the preservation movement.

One of the values that we don’t talk about as much is a sense of belonging, and I think that’s a place where the preservation community has an opportunity to adjust its positioning. To many, preservation has been positioned with a sense of belonging...if your family came here on the Mayflower. But I believe that we can develop a frame that says that preservation creates a sense of belonging for everyone.

There’s environment and conservation—this one isn’t easy because it’s a double-edge sword for us, but I don’t think we should let go of it. A large portion of citizens strongly identify with the value of conservation, but they see conservation through more of an environmental frame. They think of conserving natural systems, and human and health systems. But I would argue that everything we do in historic preservation is conservation. We have a very strong connection to effectively using the existing built environment and conserving resources, but we need to look at how we frame that connection more effectively.

Health and safety. This is the single strongest value in terms of moving people to make change. If you look at all the research that’s been done by the environmental community, the choices that swing voters make in terms of the environment are based upon perceptions of impact to their health and their family’s health, not based upon love of fish and birds.

And finally, diversity and beauty. I find that the beauty argument in particular is one that we tend to run away from. When that county commissioner or that state legislator says, “Hey, I’m all for the arts and for heritage and for culture and historic places—I think they’re beautiful buildings—but I’ve got important things I need to fund like health and safety,” we generally gallop away from that. And if the legislature was our only audience, we would say, “Well, that maybe is not the strongest closely held value.” But people do have a need for beauty, people do have a need for stories, people do have a need for culture and for identity and for the aesthetic, and we do fulfill that need very, very strongly. So it’s a value we should not run away from, but we need to be cautious about how we express it.

Reframing the Message

So we’ve got a great list of key values that we’re seeing consistently working in other arenas with a broad cross-section of American voters and that have a strong correlation to what we do in preservation. Once we’ve got that sense of who the audiences are, what their needs are, and what their values are, we then need to look at reframing the message.

When I talk about framing a message I’m not talking about Machiavellian spin. I’m talking about choosing the words and images that will predispose our audience, when they hear our message, to see it in a certain light. Framing is the use of images and words to intentionally associate an issue with certain deeply held values, thereby providing a context that predisposes an audience to accept a particular definition of the issue.

I believe that there are two core things we need to focus on as we frame a message for preservation: to demonstrate the relevancy of preservation to people’s lives, and to identify benefits that link to the strongly held values and the needs that we fulfill through preservation. If we do these two things, we’ll move the idea of preservation from being something that’s nice to something that’s critical and necessary.

I’m going to suggest a relevancy frame—that preservation makes life better, that preservation improves people’s lives—followed by supporting benefits messages that reinforce needs and values.

Benefit message number three: Everyone values a beautiful community. Nation wide we want safe streets, shopping districts, walkable neighborhoods, and quality architecture. We appreciate the unique traits of our hometowns and the distinctive buildings of our downtowns. We value the diversity and human scale that historic buildings add to our streetscapes. We enjoy visiting historic sites and vibrant communities. We treasure the connections we find with our past and with other people through the places that tell our stories. (These reinforce the desire for a sense of belonging, sense of community, sense of identity, benefit message number two: Preservation supports vital communities. By rein vesting in neighborhoods and business districts and by reusing existing structures to meet contemporary needs, we create stronger communities and spark economic activity. From addressing the housing needs in rural and urban communities to revitalizing downtowns to strengthening tourism and energizing main streets, preservation is a smart investment. (Here, we’re connecting to the need for economic development and the values of opportunity and prosperity.)

Benefit message number three: Everyone’s history matters. Our personal histories are the stories that make up the shared history of the country. Historic places provide tangible connections to our history that help us understand our past, appreciate our triumphs, and learn from our mistakes. Our historic places help define and distinguish our communities and build a strong sense of identity.

Framing is the use of images and words to intentionally associate an issue with certain deeply held values.
as well as the values of beauty and diversity.)

And benefit message number four: Preserving the earth’s natural resources is vital for our lives. We need clean air and drinking water and green spaces where we can play and explore. By reusing and revitalizing existing infrastructure and buildings, we reduce demand for building materials and development on farmland and other green spaces. Preservation helps create better health for people and the planet. (This ties into the value of conservation, connected to our desires for personal health and public health.)

These are not meant to be the messages that you walk away with and use verbatim, but are examples to spark your thinking and conversation. Obviously for each of your groups, once you look at who your audiences are and what their existing closely held values are, you’re going to make your own list of values that you need to convey in your message frame. Maybe your audience already gets the relevancy and you just need to go to the benefits, or maybe they already have the benefits down but they’re not getting the relevancy—or maybe they need both. But the key is not to get caught on the needs-based arguments but to be able to link with the closely held values as well.

Conveying the Message

Now let’s talk about how we can convey these messages in a way that engages and creates ownership with this new relevancy. I’ve distilled this down to four key tactics.

Heal Thyself

The first is heal thyself. We need to ensure that the choir learns the new music. We have to make sure that once we have our message frame down that we invest in training our staff, our volunteers, our donors, and our members—our existing choir—to own that set of messages and be able to put that into their own words and to say it consistently.

Create an Environment for Discourse

Two, we need to create a fertile environment for the discourse, and this is where I really see the use of traditional media. When a lot of us think about a media outreach campaign, we’re thinking about how we can change public opinion. That’s the right strategy if on next Tuesday you need 50 percent plus 1 to vote this way. The downside with being focused on a public opinion–based strategy is that the very next day someone who has more money than you do can run just as many ads that send the exact opposite message and move people right back.

Mass media is difficult to use to communicate about values, because most of us don’t want to engage in a conversation about our values with the television set. We engage in those conversations with other people. But what mass media is incredibly powerful at doing—and I’m including not just advertising but your website, your brochures, your PowerPoints, newspaper articles and editorials—is creating an environment that’s fertile for the discussion.

In other words, once we know the message frame that we want to be delivering to folks through grassroots direct and personal outreach, it’s much easier to do if there’s been an editorial or ad or feature story in the paper saying the same thing, and if our written materials and our websites emphasize that frame over and over.

It’s more comfortable for your board members or volunteers to have that personal conversation if the person they’re talking to might have already heard some of these same frames. Or, if after you leave that legislator’s office, or a meeting with a funder, or your church group, the people you have had personal contact with get your message reinforced by seeing it in the media, seeing it in your materials, and seeing it online.

Yet when you look at the websites of most preservation organizations, you’ll see that they have beautiful pictures of buildings, but when you see people they’re small dots in the background or they’re grinning and handing over a check. We see very little powerful photography showing people actually benefitting from preservation—shopping in those revitalized districts, living in those houses, attending renovated schools, etc. We see very little powerful photography showing people actually benefitting from preservation—shopping in those revitalized districts, living in those houses, attending renovated schools, etc. So if we’re saying some of our real values are that preservation creates opportunity and prosperity and that it increases people’s sense of place, sense of belonging, and quality of life; then how are we conveying that in our writing and in the pictures that we use?

Convert Investors Into Activists

The third piece is really where I think the most power lies,
and that’s in converting investors, to use a stock market analogy, into activist shareholders. We need to convert people from being on the sidelines (saying, “I’ll send a membership check”) to saying, “I’ll not only send you a membership check but I own the messages and I’m willing to go out and share this message with others. I’m going to talk about it at work, with my family, at church, in my neighborhood. It’s going to become a frame of reference for me.”

And we make that happen by investing in the tools and the training to make sure that all of our volunteers, our donors, and all of our board members see that as a part of their role, and see the power that that role can have when they have the messages that work and they deliver them consistently.

**Use Consistent Reinforcement**

Many of us do a great job of getting our message framed and getting it out in our website and media and through grassroots contact. What we don’t do is follow up. We don’t make sure that once somebody has made that commitment that we continually reinforce it.

We need to make that

part of our grassroots strategy: We’re going to put you on a list and make sure that you hear from us every few weeks in a way that’s personalized and that says thank you for what you’ve done. And we’ll ask you to tell us what’s happening in the field, and give you tools to handle questions and objections that come up. And we’ll celebrate what you are doing and tell others.

It makes people a part of a movement, a part of a family, and it gives them ongoing motivation to do more than just send a postcard to a legislator one time.

To conclude, I think everyone in this room is a true believer that preservation is a necessity, not a nicety. We believe it makes people’s lives better and it makes communities more vital. It’s a part of the ethos of who we are as a people that binds us together. We do not get up and work every day for a nicety. We fight for ourselves, for a community, for a family, and for a national necessity. We fight to make sure that our shared story moves forward and that it uses the places of the past in ways that create a more vibrant, vital, and equitable future.

That’s why we’re in this fight. That’s why preservation is a necessity, and why we must frame it in terms that connect to critical needs and to bedrock values.

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