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COVER: The Greektown historic district is one of the last surviving Victorian-era commercial streetscapes in downtown Detroit.

PHOTO: VITO PALMISSANO, COURTESY METRO DETROIT
EDITOR’S NOTE

In 2012 The World Bank published a collection of research papers authored by leading scholars and practitioners in heritage economics called *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Assets for Sustainable Development*. In her foreword to the book, Rachel Kyte, vice president of Sustainable Development Network at The World Bank, explains the intent of the publication:

Can investment in historic city cores and cultural heritage help reduce poverty and promote economic growth? The Economics of Uniqueness tries to answer this question. In a world where more than half of the population now lives in cities and more than 90 percent of urban growth occurs in the developing world, cities try hard to modernize without losing their unique character, embodied in their historic cores and heritage assets. As cities expand rapidly, conservation and continued use of heritage can provide crucially needed continuity and stability. In other words, the past can become a foundation for the future.... Cities that are the most successful at attracting investment and businesses to meet the aspirations of their citizens, while alleviating poverty and promoting inclusion, are those that harness all of their resources, including their heritage. In addition, heritage anchors people to their roots, builds self-esteem, and restores dignity.

A shortened version of one chapter, “Livable Historic City Cores and Enabling Environment: A Successful Recipe to Attract Investment to Cities,” written by John O’Brien, Head of Business Strategy for the Industrial Development Agency (Ireland) is reprinted here. O’Brien reminds us that to be competitive, cities will need make the most of urban assets that are unique to the city, and that much of the time, these assets can be found in the city’s historic core.
This book [The Economics of Uniqueness] takes inspiration from Nobel Prize Laureate Robert Merton Solow’s quotation: “Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any. [...] Livability is not a middle-class luxury. It is an economic imperative.”

The positive influence of cultural heritage on livability, economic growth, and local economic development has been increasingly studied and discussed in the last few decades. Building on concepts springing from biodiversity and natural heritage conservation, cultural economists have been developing their arguments about the economic importance of cultural heritage assets. This book presents the latest contributions on this topic, including methods of assessing the economic values of cultural heritage and ways to apply these findings to the practical issues faced by policy makers confronted with explosive urban growth—one of the defining characteristics of this century. The authors argue that it is vital for policy makers and other stakeholders to appreciate the important role that cultural heritage can play in generating employment and sustainable economic development, and then incorporate this understanding into urban planning and development policies. This must be done to ensure that rapid urbanization, particularly in the developing world, is not accompanied by the destruction of much of our heritage.

Urbanization and the Jobs Crisis

More than 50 percent of the world’s people already live in cities, and they account for 70 percent of world gross domestic product. Furthermore, nearly 2 billion new urban residents are expected in the next 20 years, as people “vote with their feet” in search of opportunity. Most of these people will have to find jobs in the private sector, which is the engine of growth and employment accounting for about 90 percent of employment in developing countries.

The cities that will be most successful at meeting the jobs and growth aspirations of their inhabitants, while alleviating poverty
Those cities that harness their built cultural heritage will have a competitive advantage in attracting new investment. Pictured here is San Francisco, a city known for its historic resources.

PHOTO: MELITA JURESKA MCDONALD

and working toward social inclusion, will be those that employ all of their resources to promote a healthy environment for investment and talent. Among the resources these cities need to harness is their built cultural heritage.

CITIES COMPETE FOR INVESTMENT
In essence, all mobile investment decisions are based on three fundamental considerations:
- Access to markets;
- Costs; and
- Access to resources.

In most instances, it is a combination of all three, with the dominant consideration being a function of the nature of the business or sector, the function to be carried out at the given location, and the sophistication of the market to be served. Some of the factors that may influence location decisions (such as taxes and tariffs) will be determined by central government, and while the city may influence these, it does not control them. Furthermore, if the city is competing for investment with other cities in the same jurisdiction, then that city will be offering broadly the same advantages (and indeed disadvantages).
This similarity of factors may not just apply to the same jurisdiction; it may also apply across the entire region where cities have broadly equal labor costs for similar skill levels, offer much the same development incentives in terms of local tax relief and serviced sites, and may have similar connectivity. This is to some extent the “flat world” envisaged by Thomas Friedman in his book *The World is Flat* (Friedman 2007). However, evidence would suggest that the world is not flat, but is rather punctuated by “spikes” around which economic activity clusters, and that these spikes are cities or city regions. These cities compete for investment across a range of factors. A recent study (EIU 2012) ranked the competitiveness of 120 cities across the world, taking into account eight factors: economic strength, physical capital, financial maturity, institutional effectiveness, social and cultural character, human capital, environment and natural hazards, and global appeal.

*People want to live in interesting and authentic places, and cities that take advantage of their unique cultural assets will continue to attract new residents.*
The study found that U.S. and European cities are the world’s most competitive ones today, despite concerns over ageing infrastructure and large budget deficits. The most significant advantage that these developed cities hold is their ability to foster and attract the world’s top talent. It also noted that a “middle tier” of mid-size cities is emerging as a key driver of global growth; and that while infrastructure development would continue to drive Asian growth, “one of the most pressing challenges for emerging market cities in the decades ahead will be whether they can focus their development not just on skyscrapers, rail links and other infrastructure, but also on the softer aspects that will be crucial to their ability to attract and develop tomorrow’s talent—including education, quality of life, and personal freedoms, among other things.”

It is important to note the emphasis on attracting (and retaining) talent as well as developing it. This requires a much broader strategy than simply investing in education; it will require investing in shaping a city that will be attractive to what the urban economist Richard Florida has named the “creative class.”

TALENT AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
Richard Florida, in a number of works, particularly The Rise of the Creative Class and Cities and the Creative Class (Florida 2002, 2004), argues that this creative class is the key driving force in modern economic development. He defines this class or group as being made up of those whose job is to “create meaningful new forms.” He divides the creative class into two categories:

- A super-creative core of that accounts for about 12 percent of the current U.S. workforce and comprises a group of highly educated professionals in areas such as science, engineering, research, and the creative industries such as arts, design, and media, who are fully engaged in the creative process.
- Creative professionals who are the classic knowledge-based workers including those in healthcare, business and finance, the legal sector, and education and who draw on complex bodies of knowledge to solve specific problems.

He claims that the creative class constitutes close to 40 percent of the population in the United States, that they predomi-
nantly live in cities, and that there is a strong correlation between how densely packed cities are with such people and the economic success of those cities. He further puts forth that successful cities of the future will be those that can best attract such workers; these workers, in turn, are attracted to places that have the three Ts: Talent, Tolerance, and Technology.

Florida’s arguments have been controversial in the United States, but there is little doubt that at their core is the essential truth that talented people are relatively mobile and that they wish to live in interesting places where they can combine their professional activity with a varied lifestyle. However, such people want an environment that goes well beyond pure functionality: they want to live in an interesting and authentic place.

Indeed, much of the criticism of Florida’s work has less to do with its fundamental hypothesis than with its facile application by developers whose idea of creating a cultural center is to add an art gallery/antique shop to an otherwise ugly mall. This misguided approach was recognized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2007), which noted that in some cases planners, in their desire to appeal to a stereotyped image of the tastes of knowledge workers, had seriously undermined the local distinctiveness and uniqueness of their cities and instead created “analogous cities”—cities that are so generic it is difficult to differentiate one from another.

Any good strategist will attest that the key to a successful strategy is to positively differentiate your product from your competitors, and that such “me too” efforts are therefore wasteful and self-defeating. The key to successful differentiation is to build on urban assets that are unique to the city. In most cases, this will involve regeneration of historic core areas of the city in a manner that is sensitive to their cultural heritage. This will ensure that the city will have an authentic sense of place that contributes greatly to attracting talent on a sustainable basis, and which, in turn, will be a magnet for business. As Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York City, put it recently: “I’ve always believed that talent attracts capital more effectively and consistently than capital attracts talent” (EIU 2012).
A case study of Dublin, Ireland, suggests that urban regeneration strategies that build on a city’s heritage are key to improving the city’s overall economic health. Pictured here is Dublin Castle located in the heart of historic Dublin. PHOTO COURTESY OF FÁILTE IRELAND.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

The above analysis and the case study of Dublin presented next suggest that urban regeneration strategies that build on the city’s heritage and preserve its best features can provide the differentiation that can underpin a city’s overall economic development strategy. In particular, the city’s heritage character can contribute to its ability to attract investment for knowledge-based businesses.

This is not to suggest that this is the sole or primary reason for preserving our built and cultural heritage. It is, of course, somewhat more difficult to make a direct connection between an urban regeneration/preservation project and a city’s ability to later attract talent and business investment—harder than, for example, showing how a regeneration project has attracted tourists and their spending. As with assessing the value of future tourism earnings, an evaluation model to assess the value of attracting business investment would require assumptions about the value of likely investment flows in terms of their direct contribution to the local economy, as well as any spillovers and deadweight effects.
Nevertheless, the potential for such positive results is very real.

The link between a livable urban core and a city’s ability to attract business is not confined to businesses that locate in or near the core. In the case of Dublin, proximity to a livable city center has also proved to be important for knowledge-intensive companies located on the periphery. When these companies recruited employees with specialized skills and languages from outside Dublin, many of these people chose to live in the center and reverse commute. They clearly wanted to live in a genuine urban environment. This demonstrates the need to provide housing that allows people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds to continue to live in the core, and to ensure that the core offers a vibrant community setting with access to a range of goods and services. This highlights the need both for social (low income) and affordable (lower middle income) housing to be available and for local people to be genuinely involved in the development of their city.

As Eduardo Rojas points out in his chapter, the evidence worldwide suggests that a successful project combining conservation and regeneration must have structures that respond to community interests and mobilize community support. For example, the Dublin docklands development provides for both social and affordable housing, and its overseeing authority devotes considerable resources to promoting community involvement.

It is also important to understand that the implication of the analysis is not confined to the attraction of high-tech activities. As the OECD (2006) states: “Not all metro-regions will become world leaders in high tech-activities. There is a need to search for strong viable niches outside this range.” However, it is still probable that any sector that is likely to be globally competitive in the future will rely on the city’s ability to attract and retain talent. Furthermore... while there are real benefits to be had from exploiting the tourism potential of conservation or regeneration projects, tourism alone will not generate sustained growth but rather needs to be combined with the development of other sectors. There are obvious overlapping benefits from urban renewal projects designed to attract knowledge workers and industries and those designed to attract tourism. An example is the Digital Hub in Dublin, which is
close to and in the same regeneration area as the restored Guinness’ Storehouse, the most visited attraction in the city.

Some of this analysis may seem esoteric to urban policy makers in rapidly developing cities facing the pressure to create jobs both for existing inhabitants and for the almost daily influx of new people. The policy makers’ priority in such cities may, correctly, be the development of large industrial parks on the periphery that will, they hope, attract companies with thousands of assembly line jobs.

However, it is essential to realize that such projects represent the start, not the end, of the city’s job development process. As these cities are successful, they will seek to move up the value chain and attract and develop more sophisticated investments. At that point the city will need to be able to differentiate itself from others as an attractive place for talented people. It is also the case that this transition from manufacturing and extractive to knowledge-based jobs tends to happen much more rapidly than it used to, given the speed at which new competitors for basic processes emerge.

It is therefore important that the development and preservation of valuable cultural heritage be built into development plans from an early stage, to avoid what Martin Rama [director of the World Bank] describes in his chapter as “the frantic transformation of centuries-old […] cities into soulless agglomerations of generic architecture.” This is especially vital, he continues, because “there is an element of irreversibility in transformations of this kind, as recovering what was lost is enormously more expensive than it would have been to preserve it in the first place.” The essential message is this: preserving what may prove to be an essential differentiator of the city must be built into that city’s development plans from the start, not left until later when it will be certainly more expensive, and perhaps impossible, to regain what was lost.

CONCLUSION

In an increasingly urbanized world, cities are competing to attract more foreign direct investment and businesses, which will provide their citizens with jobs. To attract such businesses, which in turn will bring talent to the city, a city needs to provide an attractive and livable urban environment. The cities that will be most successful in
creating jobs while reducing poverty will be those that use a variety of policies to utilize all their resources for creating a healthy environment for investment and talent. Historic city cores and their cultural heritage assets can have an effective role in differentiating a city from its competitors and in improving livability and attractiveness. FJ

TAKEAWAY
Click here to learn how Dublin, Ireland, has created a “Talent Hub” based on the livability of the historic city core.


References


Big Cities Preservation Leaders Talk about New Residents, New Energy, and New Preservation

People with dogs, empty nesters, families with school-age children, entrepreneurs, young people just starting out—they are all moving into the city according to the executive directors of several big city preservation organizations. Good news for preservation? You bet. This new crop of city dwellers might not call themselves preservationists, but they certainly have all the qualifications. They care deeply about their neighborhood, they want to live in places with character, and they take an active role in city life. And most importantly, they have energy and idealism to spare.

Nine directors of big city preservation organizations sat down with Susan West Montgomery, director of Information and Training at the National Trust, at the Preservation Partners meeting in Detroit last month to talk about what is happening in their cities. You might have thought that Detroit, with its much publicized litany of problems, would cast a pall on the conversations. Not at all. Instead these preservation leaders were optimistic about the future of their cities and especially about harnessing the energy and passion of these new city residents. FJ

Interviewees included:
- Kathleen Brooker, Historic Seattle
- Kathleen Crowther, Cleveland Restoration Society
- Linda Dishman, Los Angeles Conservancy
- Emilie Evans, Michigan Historic Preservation Network
- Nancy Finegood, Michigan Historic Preservation Network
- Kirk Huffaker, Utah Heritage Foundation
- Kathy Kottaridis, Historic Boston, Inc.
- Annie Levinsky, Historic Denver, Inc.
- David Preziosi, Preservation Dallas

VIDEO
To watch the video and hear what these big city preservation leaders have to say click here.
I live in Detroit and I am a historic preservationist. While other preservation-minded cities may be fighting for the consistent application of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, we are fighting for the mere survival of our architectural and cultural heritage. This is the reality of a shrinking city—where the duality of vibrancy and abandonment is strikingly visible within one city block. While mega-cities are experiencing urbanization through an unparalleled growth in their population, other cities are experiencing just the opposite—population decline. When this occurs, preservationists can dig in and say “no” to any proposed solutions to the problem, or they can accept the reality of the situation and find ways to be part of the solution. In Detroit, we are working to do just that.

Detroit’s population is 713,777, according to the 2010 census; dramatically lower than its peak at 1.85 million in 1950. Its population shrank by 25 percent in the last decade alone. This drastic population loss spanning over 60 years and still continuing, can be attributed to a number of factors including white flight, urban sprawl, the downfall of the auto industry, as well as a long history of heated racial tensions and longstanding political corruption. With the global economic collapse of 2008, shrinking cities around the world are hemorrhaging even more residents due to high unemployment rates, lack of job opportunities in the city center, as well as a record number of housing foreclosures. The result is a fragmented cityscape; one that includes abandoned and decaying buildings and a surplus of vacant and unutilized land. Residents in shrinking cities face a panoply of challenges, from inadequate city services on all levels to higher-than-average crime rates. At the same time, city budget deficits run wild trying to carry the weight of an infrastructure too large for taxable support.¹

In response, municipalities have endeavored to implement various programs and growth models including tax credits to spur
economic investment. These initiatives have been met with varying success, but on a more comprehensive scale, with the occasional exception, they have not managed to reverse shrinkage. Historically speaking, the field of urban planning has generally focused on managing growth; leaving planners ill-equipped to manage a city that is decreasing in population. Modern shrinking cities present a new and exceedingly difficult challenge. A number of urban planners argue that in many cases it is necessary to “shrink” cities down to a manageable size by encouraging and growing the stronger nodes, while repurposing the weaker or dying parts of the city and recognizing that many structures and neighborhoods may have to be abandoned altogether. This approach is known by many names including planned shrinkage, shrink to survive, and rightsizing.

**RIGHTSIZING DETROIT**

Never as densely populated as some other urban areas, nearly 80 percent of Detroit’s residential architectural stock is in the form of low-scale, single-family homes. Of the extant housing stock, almost 30 percent is vacant. These vacant residential structures have been neglected so long, that most are not only blighted, but also dangerous. The effects of population shrinkage on heritage are devastating: widespread vacancy invites crime, arson, and metal and architectural scrapping which robs historic buildings of character-defining features and historic integrity. More often than not, this directly...
contributes to their demolition. This, coupled with intentional demolition for unrealized new construction, scars the urban fabric.

Compared to other shrinking cities, Detroit has far more vacant land and demolished buildings—the shocking result is nearly 40 square miles of vacant land citywide.\(^4\) Property values are reputedly some of the lowest in the country, and property tax foreclosure auctions have added, in many cases, to a vicious cycle that includes property speculation, code violations, and repeated foreclosures. Meanwhile, these perforations in the urban fabric are emulated by perforations in human activity, where whole communities, once vibrant, are completely destroyed by the loss of population.

But this is only one dimension of Detroit’s narrative—while many areas are “dying,” other areas are full of life. On a micro-level, some neighborhoods and blocks have seen substantial population increases.\(^5\) While Detroit has lost a fourth of its population in the last ten years, it has also seen an influx of young creative entrepreneurs moving to the city. During the same period, the downtown area has seen a 59 percent increase in college-educated residents under the age of 35. Many are drawn to the city by its creative scene, inexpensive real estate, and blossoming cultural amenities. The downtown and midtown areas are also experiencing an upswing in development and adaptive use of historic resources.

Recognizing this duality, the City of Detroit is taking very important steps in responsibly approaching the problems of a
declining population and its effects by embracing and testing rightsizing planning methods and models. The Detroit Future City Strategic Framework Plan was publicly released in January of this year; the product of more than two years of civic engagement and research by the Detroit Works Project Team. The plan, which seeks to leverage Detroit’s existing assets to improve quality of life, addresses every facet of rightsizing infrastructure—from economic growth, land use, city systems, neighborhoods, to the land and building assets within them. Predicated upon the city’s vacancy metrics, its intent is to guide citywide and investment decisions by categorizing similar physical and market characteristics, and thus find ways to implement positive change. Citywide strategies to improve quality of life in neighborhoods encompass a range of metrics including safety, health, education, income, community, physical condition, housing, public services, mobility, environment, recreation, culture, and retail services and amenities.

The places and spaces where population densification has occurred almost naturally in Detroit have a wealth of cultural amenities and diverse building stock (much of it historic) that create a dynamic sense of place. The implications are that historic preservation would likely be very important to the process of city revitalization, especially under the rightsizing program. However, high-vacancy areas intended for innovative and ecological land uses appear destined for a different fate: the removal of vacant homes is encouraged, along with voluntary house-to-house swap programs which encourage residents of high-vacancy areas to relocate to higher-density areas in order to create an agglomeration of vacant land which can then be transformed to productive landscape-based uses. According to the Detroit Future City Framework, these uses may include research plots, urban farming, aquaculture, rapid reforestation, converting obsolete roads to rivers, and blue and green infrastructure such as low-lying lakes, small retention ponds, carbon forests, and industrial buffers. There are also plans for developing community spaces in the form of event landscapes, art environments, greenways, phytoremediation fields (using plants to mediate environmental issues), and feral meadows. This large-scale land acquisition and assembly by both the private and public
sectors has the potential to drastically alter historic spatial relationships and settings including roadways, and lead to the demolition of existing structures and displacement of existing residents.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RIGHTSIZING
It is difficult to know how a historic preservationist moves forward in a shrinking city given these new approaches to planning. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) published a report in 2012 that lists common issues associated with shrinkage and how historic preservation is and can be further incorporated into municipal responses. According to interviews and surveys conducted by the ACHP of preservation planners and advocates in 20 U.S. shrinking cities, these issues include vacant land and buildings, quality and condition of structures, and limited resources. These

BEGINNINGS OF RIGHTSIZING
Shrinkage can occur for many reasons, and is not unique to postindustrial cities, or even to modern times. Population declines, whether temporary or more permanent, can be caused by a myriad of factors including changing economics, natural disasters, war, famine, low birth rates, and political unrest. One of the first attempts to address the effects of shrinkage in the modern age was undertaken by German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers in 1977. He proposed several different enclaves or nodes connected by greenways, forming a type of green urban archipelago. This was a concept—an ideal utopia of sorts—to confront the problem of shrinkage, but unfortunately Ungers did not postulate any methods for public policy enactment. More recent adaptations of Ungers’ work include the “Core & Plasma” concept by L21, a group of Leipzig architects dedicated to urban transformation. The “core” areas function as the more viable concentrations of dynamic population density, while the “plasma” constitutes the areas of disinvestment. In this concept, the “louder” plasma would be demolished to make way for reforestation, while the “soft” plasma would function as a buffer, absorbing both growth from the core and shrinkage from the periphery. In the United States, more direct implementation of these concepts has been explored and instituted at varying levels, with the most comprehensive municipal approaches coming from the Youngstown 2010 Plan and now the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework Plan.
concerns need to be integrated into common municipal strategies that include planning, mass demolition, and landbanking. Most importantly, the report illustrates that while vibrancy is recognized as coinciding with historic urban areas, historic preservation is rarely part of the comprehensive planning process and is, for all intents and purposes, an afterthought. The correlation between heritage, sense of place, historic preservation, and healthy urbanism is simply not being made.

A more detailed analysis of historic preservation and rightsizing was undertaken by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network in *Putting the Right in Rightsizing*, highlighting efforts in Saginaw and Lansing, Mich. Historic preservation intervention focused on landbanking, Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funding use, Section 106 review, as well as city planning, including historic resource identification and master plan review. Community empowerment was a major tool in fostering proactive historic preservation efforts. The report included a handy checklist to address historic preservation concerns, particularly on the municipal level. Strategies were executed through community engagement, organization, and capacity-building, with emphasis on adaptable urban designs that thoughtfully consider the historic value of cultural resources in the wider framework of city planning.

The difficulties of shrinking cities involve balancing the promotion of historic preservation with the challenging demands of economic, developmental, and social circumstances. If historic preservation can make broader connections between urban issues and respective disciplines, stakeholder engagement and support can be far more encompassing. Differing motivations do not necessarily mean separate outcomes when it comes to good city-making! Fostering relationships with community organizations, developers, and other stakeholders is integral to increasing historic preservation support and potential. The first step is to open a friendly dialogue.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE DEMOLITION PROCESS**

With mass demolition being a reality in shrinking cities, historic preservationists can help not only with targeting demolition
appropriately, but also with the process itself. Deconstruction—the dismantling of structures in order to salvage all reusable materials—is a viable and sustainable alternative that should be incorporated into the toolbox of demolition on a large scale. It provides environmental sustainability, reduces landfill waste, and preserves historic materials and architectural character through their incorporation in historic building restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive use, as well as adding interesting historic details and finishes to new construction. The National Trust for Historic Preservation issued a position paper on deconstruction which focuses on site selection. While there are a surplus of structures in the City of Detroit that require demolition, attention should be paid to where deconstruction or demolition occurs, so as to maintain neighborhood continuity and ensure that homes that lend themselves to rehabilitation or adaptive use are preserved. In this sense, deconstruction is a last resort when all other methods have been exhausted. Historic preservationists in shrinking cities should be actively involved in discussions with city officials about possible deconstruction activities. Likewise, metal and architectural scrapping is a historic preservation issue and proper regulatory oversight is long overdue.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

As cities are narrative spaces that are culturally coded where physical spaces are accompanied with images and symbols that inform our perception, imagination, and overall experience in an environment, incorporating a more holistic understanding of heritage is paramount. An exploration of cultural identity and public and social history forms local context that aids in creating and implementing historic preservation initiatives that connect citizens with their environment in an emotional way. This process includes community engagement that goes further than traditional consultation or
rolling out a set plan, and instead encourages ordinary citizens to find deeper meaning in their environment to convey their needs, wants, and vision on the front end. This type of consultation helps to create a platform for understanding and discourse that maintains community identity, while fostering diversity and creativity.⁷

In addition to more traditional forms of historic preservation advocacy and awareness, the realities of shrinking cities provide some interesting opportunities for historic preservation: community gardens; unearthing natural features; phytoremediation; public transportation; art environments; and the reuse of obsolete infrastructure in new ways. Each opportunity has the potential to explore historical and cultural narratives. This interpretation goes beyond that of traditional museum-based display and static docent speeches in a “velvet rope” atmosphere. These values include increased social connections within groups and communities.⁸

Vernacular heritage is a powerful part of public memory where its importance is less about design and more about political meanings and social associations. Its evolution through time is just as important. Therefore, we should be careful not to ignore painful histories but rather shed light on them to foster understanding of the environment and how it is a part of our shared heritage.
CONCLUSION
The overarching theme in Detroit and other shrinking cities is that to promote quality of life, shrinkage must be addressed honestly and responsibly. Historic preservation must take part in this process and do so in a manner that requires thinking out of the traditional “box.” This means questioning and possibly breaking the rules; compromising; understanding; collaboration; and the ability to creatively approach crisis with an eye for opportunity and experiment. To ignore the underlying problems of shrinking cities is to encourage the atrophy of dynamic urbanism, and with it, the survival of tangible and intangible heritage. What is needed are creative leaders—urban editors who recognize that making the world a better place starts at home, that choosing to do so is voluntary and that it is a collective effort. FJ

MELANIE A. MARKOWICZ is a Detroit historic preservationist who focuses on rightsizing issues. She also serves as president of the board of directors for Preservation Detroit, a nonprofit devoted to preserving Detroit’s architectural and cultural heritage.

1 Although this situation is not unique, especially in light of the recent economic crisis, it is a situation that is always inextricably linked to the problems of shrinking cities.
Over the past 60 years, hundreds of communities across the Rust Belt have lost population. Former manufacturing centers that once churned out automobiles, household goods, and war munitions to power the nation have seen up to 60 percent of their residents move away. Those who remain in these legacy cities and towns face a formidable swath of challenges: few jobs, struggling educational systems, high crime rates, and vacant buildings—to name a few.

The scale of vacancy can be difficult for outsiders to fathom. Places that used to pride themselves on the affordability of single-family houses now have thousands of empty buildings and vacant lots. This is true in Cleveland and Syracuse, and certainly true in Detroit. It is true even in cities like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where rising populations and new economic activity suggest regeneration and renewal, but reinvestment in the built environment lags behind.

Not everything can be saved, as a drive through any one of these cities demonstrates. Vacancy and abandonment are common. Empty lots are interspersed with tidy houses on one block, while the next block is wholly ravaged by long disinvestment. Across the street, well-kept homes stand between boarded-up buildings and collapsing houses. Few neighborhoods are untouched.

Census numbers back this up. Young educated professionals are driving apartment conversions and hangouts in hip urban neighborhoods from Buffalo to St. Louis, but the overall population in these cities continues its decades-long slide. And population loss and its attendant challenges are not limited to the Rust Belt: 41 states across the country have at least one community with a population of more than 20,000 that has experienced a decline in the number of residents during the last decade.

If we want our cities to continue to be centers of people, ideas, and activity, clearly something must be done.
RIGHTSIZING: THE PLANNING CONTEXT

In rightsizing, a city’s physical fabric is adjusted to accommodate the needs of the current and expected population. The idea is loaded. Rightsizing aims to address abandoned properties on a large scale, often through demolition. Many high-vacancy neighborhoods—still reeling from the aftereffects of heavy-handed, top-down urban renewal of the 1960s and ’70s—are suspicious of such an approach. Yet there are few alternatives for cities facing budget cuts to public transportation, police, and fire departments; increasing numbers of vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties; and miles of underutilized infrastructure with mounting maintenance costs.

Youngstown, Ohio, was the first city to publicly embrace rightsizing as the backbone of a citywide plan. An inclusive community process made this shift from traditional growth discussions politically possible. More than 5,000 citizens participated in the planning process, and 150 volunteers signed up for working groups that tackled economic development, quality of life, neighborhood planning, and marketing. The resulting plan, Youngstown 2010, proposed an ambitious civic agenda: to stabilize the population, consolidate infrastructure and public services, redefine the local economy, focus revitalization efforts in viable residential areas and commercial nodes, improve public safety and education, and retool the city’s public image.²
Planners, urban policymakers, and media across the country took note. Youngstown was named one of the top ten places in the country to start a business by *Entrepreneur Magazine* in 2009. A steel-tube manufacturing company expanded its local facilities. The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation, formed to target investment, has seen notable successes in the Idora neighborhood. While Youngstown’s challenges did not disappear, it was—and is—still kicking.

Detroit is also facing the future with a mix of optimism, pragmatism, and pugilism. The city completed Detroit Future City in 2012. This long-range framework proposes sweeping strategies for revitalization as a permanently smaller city. These include finding creative, productive uses for vacant land; focusing resources and density in low-vacancy, job-rich areas; and coordinating with a variety of stakeholders. On the heels of the plan’s public unveiling, the Kresge Foundation committed $150 million toward implementation.

Strategies for managing vacant land and abandoned properties dominate these municipal plans and related conferences and publications. Preservation is typically included, but it plays a small and isolated role. Youngstown 2010 calls out the “authentic urban environment” of its central core as a significant asset, and Detroit Future City acknowledges the amenities of traditional neighborhoods and recommends prioritizing rehabilitation of historic buildings. The Reclaiming Vacant Properties conference organized each year by the Center for Community Progress nods to adaptive use in a session or two. The American Assembly, a think tank based at Columbia University, focused on legacy cities with a report in 2011 and a conference and report in 2012. Both reports highlighted quality of place as a critical goal and called out historic buildings and neighborhoods as part of that, but the term “historic preservation” did not appear in either.

On its own, the preservation field has mustered a limited response. The National Trust sounded a call to arms with a 2009 *ForumJournal* article on the foreclosure crisis and a “Thinking About Shrinking” discussion at the National Preservation Conference in
Buffalo later that year. 

More recently, the Trust and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network have partnered with local foundations to create two yearlong Preservation Specialist positions in Michigan communities. The first specialist was based in Saginaw and Lansing in 2010-11. Her ambitious work plan included assisting city officials in understanding, identifying, and planning for historic resources; strengthening the local historic district commission through recruitment and training; building capacity for preservation advocacy in the local community; and proposing new partnerships with local organizations and institutions. A new Detroit preservation specialist recently began work with a similar goal of integrating preservation into local rightsizing efforts. At the federal level, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (AChP) established a Rightsizing and Historic Preservation Task Force to promote holistic rightsizing models through federal policies and incentives.

Still, no overarching framework exists for preservation to be integrated into rightsizing policies and plans or in decision-making on the ground, though preservation advocates are increasingly realizing the need.

**RIGHTSIZING CITIES INITIATIVE**

In 2012, PlaceEconomics established the Rightsizing Cities Initiative (RCI) to explore why and how preservation should be included as an essential part of rightsizing. I joined RCI as director, building on my master’s thesis on preservation planning in older industrial cities. Our initial undertaking was a research project for the ACHP’s Rightsizing Task Force. The goal was to establish a baseline of knowledge around rightsizing practices and trends and to determine how federal resources were—or were not—being used for planning. Information was collected through interviews and surveys with municipal planners and preservation advocates in the 20 cities that had lost the largest share of population between 1960 and 2000.

Our findings were alarming, though not surprising. Preservation was rarely a part of long-range planning efforts, though almost every city we examined was actively working to adapt to a smaller population. Common strategies and tools included comprehensive planning, demolition, land banks, and vacant property policies.
Preservation advocates were playing traditional roles with education, historic designation, and Section 106 review. Yet—as planners began to feel their way with reshaping cities—preservationists lagged behind. Though they had a substantial arsenal of tools and expertise around the built environment, these typically did not lead to participation in the rightsizing process beyond public comments and comprehensive plan working groups.

As a telling indicator, the planners and preservationists we interviewed named 13 roles that preservation advocates were currently playing—roles limited to the areas of planning, education, and advocacy. Their list of roles that preservationists could play reached 35 items in much more diverse areas, including focusing resources, developing incentives, reducing demolitions, and enforcement and maintenance. Both preservation advocates and planners see a clear role for preservationists, but a lack of outreach, knowledge, organization, and resources have prevented meaningful participation.

Good practices at the intersection of preservation and rightsizing did emerge. Cincinnati redirects demolition money to mothballing in historic districts, and Cincinnati Preservation Association staff help prioritize buildings on the demolition list based on architectural quality. Dayton, Ohio, provides its housing inspectors with electric drills so they can replace boards on the windows of vacant houses, rather than noting and entering them into a computerized system back in the office.

Partnerships are critical in cash-strapped cities, some of which rely on a single planner to handle day-to-day matters and craft long-range plans. A number of cities work with anchor institutions to coordinate resources in specific areas. Planners in Rochester, N.Y., reach out to the school district to coordinate investments in the same neighborhoods. Cincinnati preservationists have taken on the role of marketing historically significant vacant buildings, and the Cleveland Restoration Society has worked with the Cuyahoga Land Bank to hold properties while a buyer is found.

RCI’s next challenge was twofold: to articulate why preservation should be involved in rightsizing and to determine how that involvement should happen. We didn’t have to reach far for compelling
reasons. Historic neighborhoods boast unique building stock, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use commercial districts, and proximity to jobs and transit—all qualities highly prized by potential residents. The National Association of Realtors found that two-thirds of prospective homebuyers prioritize walkability in deciding where to live.12 Another study found that over 75 percent of young professionals are choosing to move to historic downtowns and older urban neighborhoods.13

Additional research for the ACHP Task Force offered strong evidence that these preferences hold true even when cities are losing population. We looked at census data from 2000 and 2010 and found that the top 20 shrinking cities lost 11.6 percent of their population as a whole.14 Seventeen cities had local historic districts that lost a combined 6.6 percent. In 11 of those cities, the population change in local historic districts was more favorable than that of the city. Historic districts were not immune from population loss, but overall they had less of a problem than the cities as a whole.

Beyond population, historic buildings and neighborhoods offer proven opportunities for revitalization. Preservationists’ bread and butter is mobilizing community members to effect change in the built environment, almost always working with scant funding, time, or both. The Main Street model—commercial revitalization in the context of historic resources—has jumpstarted hundreds of downtowns and neighborhood business districts by leveraging public funds. Local developers and residents undertake small-scale
rehabilitations to bring back buildings and neighborhoods using historic tax credits, property tax abatements, and other incentives. Startup businesses can afford to rent space in older buildings, creating local jobs. Apartment buildings and smaller, older houses meet the needs of empty nesters and a growing demographic of one-person households. Historic communities, designated or not, contain considerable resources that can and should form the kernels of smaller, more sustainable cities.

RELOCAL: A STRATEGIC APPROACH
We developed the ReLocal tool as a way to help municipal governments and their partners make strategic, data-based decisions about where and how to reinvest at the neighborhood level. ReLocal seeks to evaluate neighborhoods holistically and comprehensively, using nearly 70 metrics across 8 categories ranging from the built and natural environment to fiscal responsibility. Though it is not an explicit preservation tool, ReLocal recognizes qualities like walkability, architectural character, and real estate stability as the building blocks for strong, sustainable places.

The local community adds an essential layer of information about local priorities. Planning decisions based on consultants parachuting in, conducting cursory public meetings, and running some numbers miss a central opportunity of the rightsizing process: to reshape and strengthen places based on what communities want. ReLocal incorporates a neighborhood-level survey and weighting system to include these priorities.

We soon recognized that simply identifying more viable neighborhoods was not a practically useful or politically tenable solution. Rightsizing efforts must address all neighborhoods in a city, and reinvestment takes many forms: from demolition, land banking, and urban agriculture to rehabilitation and development incentives. We designed ReLocal to identify what the full range of neighborhoods needed to become more sustainable, understanding that long-range sustainability has different meanings in a neighborhood with many vacant properties and a declining population and a neighborhood with a stable population but a struggling commercial corridor.

Indeed, struggling towns, booming metropolitan regions, and
prosperous cities all must make strategic decisions around where to allocate public resources and encourage private investment; none has unlimited funding. We believe that every neighborhood in every city should be sustainable and well used. In some areas, that might mean finding incentives to add population and encourage development; in others, it may look like prioritizing open land uses and offering remaining residents a more pastoral lifestyle. In both cases, conscious decisions are necessary—and should reflect real data and community priorities.

MUNCIE FIELD TEST
Earlier this year, Muncie, Ind., was the focus of ReLocal’s initial field test. We were looking for a small city with distinct urban qualities and a range of neighborhood conditions, and enthusiastic local partners in city government and Indiana Landmarks made Muncie an easy choice. Masters students in Ball State’s historic preservation program provided assistance with field surveys and research. We also partnered with LocalData, an online community data collection tool, to beta-test its platform with our fieldwork.

We selected five older neighborhoods near the city center to examine: four focus neighborhoods that have lost significant population and are, by many measures, economically distressed; and one relatively prosperous “benchmark” neighborhood adjacent to Ball State University. Three of the five neighborhoods contained National Register historic districts, and one of those also had a locally designated historic district. GIS data was collected for all neighborhoods from the city, county, state, and census. We spent nearly a week in Muncie to meet with local officials and gather field data such as buildings’ architectural character and up-to-date occupancy status.

Rehabilitation activity in Muncie’s Emily Kimbrough National Register Historic District.
PHOTO: CARA BERTRON
We then analyzed the small mountain of data.

Even in early analysis, some interesting patterns emerged. The four focus neighborhoods have low median household incomes and face much higher unemployment rates than the benchmark neighborhood. However, half of these neighborhoods have twice as high aggregated household purchasing power as the wealthier benchmark neighborhood due to denser development. Income distribution is more even, too. When compared to Muncie’s jobs per capita, three of the four focus neighborhoods hold nearly as many or more jobs per resident. Economic opportunity is not uniformly high, but it is greater than the initial numbers suggest.

The focus neighborhoods also rank highly in our community engagement category, with excellent access to community centers and organizations serving seniors and youth. Three of the four outscore the benchmark neighborhood in the strength of their neighborhood associations. The two focus neighborhoods with historic districts mustered the most residents by far to participate in our community survey. Though none of these are definitive measures by themselves, together they begin to reveal the underlying social strengths of local communities.

Distinctions appeared in our analysis of the physical environment as well. Not surprisingly, the neighborhoods with historic districts score higher in architectural character than the neighborhoods with no designated districts. Buildings in these neighborhoods are also in better condition. And all the neighborhoods we looked at had more trees per acre than the city of Muncie as a whole. It is important to note that these are true for the entire neighborhood, not just the historic districts within them—even when the historic districts constitute only a small part of the neighborhood. The
Muncie field test reinforced our premise that older and historic neighborhoods have the resources and ability to play a central role in rightsizing strategies. We are now looking forward to taking those lessons and applying them in other cities.

CONCLUSION

Older industrial cities face tremendous challenges. Though preservationists are used to uphill battles and long shots, these cities are the largest-scale, longest shot yet. In many neighborhoods, population densities are insufficient to support local business districts. Buildings that need maintenance and investment easily outnumber willing buyers. Moreover, the math of rehabilitation doesn’t always work out: it is possible to invest $100,000 in improving a house and sell it at a market value of $30,000. Limited public dollars mean fewer incentives—and fewer city staff to develop and implement plans and provide assistance with preservation issues. The public infrastructure and services that play an integral part in local quality of life are too underfunded to meet expectations. And while foreclosures in recent years have affected cities across the country, they hit older industrial cities particularly hard, adding another wave of abandonment to decades of disinvestment.

Still, these are the places where preservation is most necessary. In an increasingly mobile economy, quality of place is an enormous advantage. Older cities cannot compete with the surrounding suburbs by simply demolishing buildings to create larger lots. Instead, cities must emphasize their strengths: a sense of place, well-constructed buildings with exquisite architecture, the option to walk or take transit instead of driving, and more concentrated, diverse human capital. People moving back to the city may not be able to express the charm of Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Square or Detroit’s Midtown in terms of history, density, or urban design elements, but they know that’s where they want to live.

Historic places should be the cornerstone of rightsizing efforts. Our work in Muncie shows that older neighborhoods have quantifiable strengths, with or without historic districts, though they still have a way to go. Thus—while architectural character can still be first in preservationists’ priorities—it must be followed closely by
other considerations, like working to strengthen schools and community organizations in older and historic neighborhoods. Critically, preservationists must do the legwork to be included: we must make the connections, present ourselves at the table with a useful proposed role, and refuse to leave. These are our cities—our places—and we have work to do. FJ

Cara Bertron is the director of the Rightsizing Cities Initiative at PlaceEconomics. She and Donovan Rypkema will present on ReLocal at the 2013 National Preservation Conference in Indiana.
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6 City of Youngstown, 139 (also see p. 43 and 116); City of Detroit, “Detroit Future City,” 19, 41.


Places change: sometimes suddenly, often gradually. The role of preservation advocates and planners is to help plan for and manage that change, creating healthy, dynamic places while preserving and adapting important heritage.

Historic resource surveys play a fundamental role in this process. On a basic level, they provide information about the local history and landscape that allows planners, preservationists, and community members to identify potential historic resources. With a strong, proactive framework for preserving the built environment—and data to support it—resources can be considered in large- and small-scale discussions around neighborhood plans, new developments, and demolitions.

In recent years, technology has greatly expanded our ability to record data about the built environment, as well as to analyze and share the information we collect. However, these tools alone do not solve the challenges of scale, time, effectiveness, and funding. As yet, there is no standard model for integrating survey data with planning efforts. Furthermore, few cities and preservation organizations have the ability to pay for surveys that document every building over 50 years old.

Several innovative survey approaches have been developed that leverage technology to pragmatically address these challenges. They collect information using participatory online platforms and high-resolution online maps, in addition to fieldwork. These technologies allow survey work to quickly cover large areas at lower costs by providing a means for the broader public to participate in survey work and viewing entire blocks in birds-eye view. One approach redefines the survey unit as a multi-parcel unit, scaling up data collection at a lower cost. Each survey methodology facilitates information-sharing between agencies by linking survey results in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) databases to planning and other systems.
For instance, the Austin Historical Survey Wiki, developed by the University of Texas at Austin, brings preservation into the crowdsourcing age. The publicly accessible online database allows anyone to register as a user and enter information about any property in the city. After preservation professionals vet the information entered into the wiki for accuracy, Austin’s historic preservation office reviews it and enters it into the city’s official inventory.

In Philadelphia, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania wanted to assess large swaths of Philadelphia in a very short time to inform a comprehensive planning effort and rezoning across the city. They devised character studies: coarse-grain, very low-cost surveys that use digital aerial photographs and historic maps to identify groupings of properties constructed at a similar time with similar forms. Windshield surveys for integrity can be targeted at particular property ages or types based on GIS analysis. The process ultimately produces maps of historic character areas and GIS files for planners’ use.

To learn more about the latest in survey techniques and approaches, plan to attend “Survey Slam” at the National Preservation Conference in Indianapolis. FJ

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Iconic Urban Buildings

The post office with imposing columns, the bustling train station and its lofty clock tower, the gothic revival cathedral—if your city had these, then you had successfully arrived. No longer a mere trading post or seaport, your city was now a major player, and you could point with pride to its fine public buildings, which represented the aspirations of the citizens. These buildings represented Progress with a capital “P.”

But progress also meant the demise of some of these landmarks. New modes of transportation called for modern facilities, changing settlement patterns caused houses of worship and schools to close their doors for lack of attendance, and new technologies meant that the century-old library couldn’t meet the needs of patrons anymore.

These iconic buildings, however, were sturdy and well-designed structures, and preservationists, developers, and city leaders found new uses for many of these buildings. Train stations are now luxury hotels, courthouses are museums, and churches are performance spaces.

We could go on and on about the challenges of preserving these iconic buildings and how these challenges have been successfully overcome. But the old adage, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” applies here. We have created “iconic building cards” for seven building types—post offices, schools, houses of worship, stadiums, courthouses, libraries and train stations—that outline the challenges, solutions, and available resources for each type.

Click here to find out more about:

- **POST OFFICES**
- **STADIUMS**
- **SCHOOLS**
- **COURTHOUSES**
- **HOUSES OF WORSHIP**
- **TRAIN STATIONS**
- **LIBRARIES**
Telling the Story of Urbanization

ELIZABETH BYRD WOOD

It’s probably a safe bet that city living today, if you take away Starbucks and Subway, is not too different from city living a century ago. People crowding the sidewalk on their way to work, shopping, or school; a mélange of grime, odors, and noise, crime (both big-time and merely annoying); and an ever-changing grab bag of people representing different cultures, races, ages, religions, languages, and income levels.

What is the best way to tell the story of cities and the people who lived there? A story that is both uplifting and shameful, a story of optimism and defeat, a story of grand visions and failed experiments. A story that continues to evolve today as cities absorb newcomers from all corners of the world.

Across the country, a handful of museums are using the power of place to tell the stories of urbanization. More than just cultural centers, these museums link the history of urban dwellers with the city where they settled. At the same time, these museums are creatively involving residents in telling their stories. These museums—housed in former tenements, hotels, and apartments—are bringing life to urban centers, reflecting the generational stories of residents, and giving them a sense of pride in their history and their city.

This article looks at three museums in three different cities—the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, and the National Public Housing Museum in Chicago—to explore their role in telling the complex stories of our nation’s big cities.

HISTORY FROM THE HEART

Most historic house museums have expanded their interpretation programs to tell a multi-layered version of the events that took place there. They have learned that today’s visitors are equally interested—and maybe more so—in life below the stairs, or in the alley, or in the factory, as they are in life in the plantation house,
or the industrialist’s mansion. Particularly in the case of these three urban museums, they are helping visitors understand the experiences of the working poor and immigrant families—their fears, their dreams, and their successes—the quintessential American story. Often museums are turning to the source and collecting the oral histories of the people who once lived there, and in some cases, who still live there.

The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle’s Chinatown-International District uses personal recollections to tell the stories of hardship and struggles with identity and acceptance. The museum is located in a former hotel where countless immigrants from Asia found a place of refuge. Interviews with former residents have revealed stories both poignant and at the same time uplifting. Debbie Louie relates the story of growing up in an apartment along the small alley that ran between the hotel and the neighboring building. As a girl she was invited to a sleepover, and the next day, when the mother offered to drive her home, Debbie says that she was too embarrassed to admit that she lived in an apartment in an alley and asked to be let off at the end of the street. Today, however, she can now say proudly that her home is a museum, and that her story is worth telling.

The term “public housing” means many things to many people. Former residents of these housing projects have rich stories to tell about growing up and living in these urban apartments. In Chicago, The National Public Housing Museum, which tells the story of subsidized housing, hasn’t had its official opening yet, but its founders and the museum president are moving ahead full steam. Keith Magee, president and chief executive officer of the museum, explains that the idea for a museum jelled about 16 years ago, when the City of Chicago proposed demolishing a number of the city’s public housing projects and replacing them with mixed-income neighborhoods. In the eyes of the city leaders, large public housing projects were part of the city’s history they would just as soon forget. “Not so fast,” said former residents Deverra Beverly and Beatrice Johnson, “We want to save one of the ‘projects’ and use it to tell our story.” The Chicago Housing Authority was skeptical, but it conducted a feasibility study and looked at other “sites of
conscience” (like the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City) and came to the conclusion that, yes, this might work.

With funding from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and encouragement from Sunny Fischer, the foundation’s executive director, the museum began to take shape. Work on the building is expected to begin in September and fund raising is well underway.

The museum is gathering the life stories and special memories about residents’ experiences living in public housing communities in Chicago and other cities. These stories will become part of the museum’s living history archives and exhibitions. The stories, which appear on the museum’s website, are inspiring and give new meaning to the razing of public housing across America, as seen with the implosion of Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis. For example Mrs. Pamela Reynolds writes:

[I learned] life lessons that last a lifetime. Just like the ones I learned in Jackie Robinson, and Oakenwald-South on Lake Park. I learned to laugh, love and live. I also learned that disappointment comes, but they are not dreams denied but deferred. I am a success story and a living testimony that brick by brick the projects build towers of power and not failure.

The museum not only shares these stories, but interweaves them with national issues of public policy, city planning, architecture, and arts and culture.
Three museums in St. Louis are taking a different tack and joining forces to tell the story of urban life in St. Louis. The Urban Museum Collaborative is more than just a list of museums and sites listed in a tourism brochure, it is a true collaborative effort involving programming, educational resources, a website, tours, and community events.

In 2009 Barbara Decker, a museum consultant, was approached by Missouri Humanities Council to work with three small museums in St. Louis that were struggling. These museums, located within a mile or two of each other had very small staffs and limited resources.

By joining forces, however, these museums—the Campbell House Museum, The Eugene Field House Museum, and The Griot Museum of Black History—are making the story of St. Louis come alive in dramatic new ways. Visitors of all ages become engaged in a “museum without walls,” exploring, discovering, and learning in a dynamic and changing city.

Decker explains that the goal of the collaborative is to tell a more inclusive history of St. Louis by interweaving the life stories of several families and individuals—both humble and mighty—that unfolded in a single urban community. Stories that touch on immigration, entrepreneurship, slavery, and human rights.

She says: “The power of a specific building on a street when seen as a container of memory and the container of the life stories of those who lived there gave new meaning to the importance of place and in so doing transform the landscape in which they reside. For me, this is all a part of the importance of understanding the past so that we may build a more just and equitable society.”
MUSEUMS WITHOUT WALLS

Cassie Chinn, deputy executive director of the Wing Luke Museum, is a fourth generation Seattle resident. Her grandfather once owned a poultry shop on the ground floor of the hotel that is now the Wing Luke Museum. Chinn calls the surrounding neighborhood—the Chinatown-International District—the museum’s largest exhibit. Museum visitors are given a pass that allows them to come and go as they please during the day. They can walk around the district, enjoy lunch at one of the many neighborhood restaurants, and then re-enter the museum to see the exhibits. Chinn explains that they don’t have a cafe at the museum on purpose, so as to encourage visitors to get out and experience the community. They can also go on a museum-led neighborhood tour that covers not only the architecture and history of the district, but embraces the full culture of the people who lived there and involves stops at local bakeries and tea houses.

Those interested in the National Public Housing Museum can truly experience a museum without walls by going online and exploring a 3D laser scan of the museum’s future home, which will be located in the last remaining home of the Jane Addams Homes,
constructed in 1938. The scan was produced in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, UK, and website visitors can move through the building’s hallways, living spaces, and courtyards—a hard hat tour minus the work boots and hard hat.

Museum administrators the National Public Housing Museum plan to re-create period living spaces of public housing apartments during eight consecutive decades (1938–2002). These rooms will help visitors understand what life was like for the many people who called the three-story brick building at 1322-24 West Taylor home. Magee notes that you can’t tell the narrative of public housing in a pristine museum setting. He says, “the integrity of the building must remain in order to tell the power of place.”

TELLING THE STORIES OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS
Cities have always been a place where many cultures exist side by side. As older immigrant groups move out and new arrivals move in, the neighborhoods change and evolve with each new group. Nowhere is this more evident than at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City which focuses on the urban immigrant experience.

Founded 1988, The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is located at 97 Orchard Street in an ordinary looking, six-story brick building. Constructed in 1863, the tenement was home to nearly 7,000 immigrants over the years. Today, visitors can view restored apartments of past residents from different time periods and hear from interpreters about what life was like for these immigrant families. The museum also offers walking tours of the Lower East Side. In 2007 the museum purchased the nearby 103 Orchard Street, which opened as a new education and visitor center in 2011.

Morris J. Vogel, president of the museum, explains that the museum tells the story of New York City poor and the succession of immigrant families for more than 200 years. He says, “We explain how the population and community grew. Our tenement housed the Italian and Jewish immigrants who worked in the garment industry and who gave the city its character.”

Vogel adds, “We also tell the story of the city’s growth outside as families moved to the outer boroughs to escape from the neighborhood’s un wholesomeness.”
Keith Magee at the National Public Housing Museum explains that the museum’s goal is to let “the voice and will of the residents talk about the resilience of the poor working class to realize they are part of a just society.” Magee hopes that the idea behind the National Public Housing Museum will spread to other cities and that they will create satellite museums that will allow residents to tell their story. He is quick to point out. “The museum is not just for Chicago residents; this is a national, even international site.”

**USING HISTORY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE**

What these museums also share is a commitment not only to making history come alive, but to making it relevant to today’s visitors.

The current debates over immigration offer a powerful example of how the past and present merge, and shapes much of the programming at both the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and the Wing Luke Museum.
Morris Vogel explains that the Tenement Museum uses the history of the site as a tool for addressing contemporary issues, including immigration. The museum has recently acquired another building and plans to use it to relate the story of the great migration of the 20th century when Puerto Ricans, Chinese, and Holocaust survivors flocked to our country’s big cities in search of a refuge. Vogel says, “We tell the stories of ordinary people with everyday lives. Most Americans understand that what makes this country unique is that it provided a haven for those in search of better lives. Lots of people are interested in that story and they can relate to the pinched circumstances and the efforts of newcomers to build lives and communities.”

Tour guides at the Tenement Museum draw parallels and highlight differences between the immigrant experience of a century ago and today. Guides are trained to stimulate questions and to help visitors make connections.

“These immigrants made homes, raised families, and planted dreams in the fertile soil of the American dream,” Vogel says. “Those stories can touch people on an emotional and intellectual level. Museum goers need to invest emotionally in the past to draw connections with the present.”

Across the country at the Wing Luke Museum, visitors hear about immigration policies, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the first major law restricting immigration to the United States. Cassie Chinn says that tour leaders ask visitors to think about how this legislation affected future generations and how it has influenced current U.S. immigration policies. They also explore themes universal to all Americans, not just those of Asian descent. “We ask visitors, ‘What does it mean to be a family in a new place?’” Chinn explains.

The Wing Luke Museum also addresses the issue of homelessness. One of the museum’s current exhibits, Uprooted and Invisible: Asian American Homelessness, illuminates “hidden homelessness” in the Asian American community and explores the experience of homelessness and the historic disruptions and traumas Asian immigrants have survived in the U.S. The exhibit helps visitors understand the disruption and isolation of homelessness and provides concrete suggestions about how to support homeless people in our communities.
Public housing represented a major federal intervention into city development and the lives of citizens. Magee hopes that the National Public Housing Museum can help visitors to better understand the role of government and the social contract government has with its citizens. He says, “We want to get people to think about what is the role of government in taking care of the least advantaged among us.”

CONCLUSION
America is home to many different cultures, and nowhere is this more evident than in our nation’s cities. You may be a New Yorker, Chicagoan or San Franciscan, but you might also consider yourself a Trinidadian, Cuban, or Filipino. Merge the two identities together and you get an urban population with a rich and complex history that deserves to be celebrated. By preserving the stores, apartments, sweatshops, and beer saloons where urban dwellers once lived and worked, we give life to these stories. By walking through Canton Alley in Seattle, visitors can relate to a little girl living in an alley apartment. By standing in the re-created apartment of a Greek Sephardic family and listening to a costumed interpreter playing the role of 14-year-old Victoria Confino, visitors can experience what it was like to live in a tenement in New York City in 1916. By preserving such sites, these pioneering museums are helping us understand changes in human patterns over time and the places and communities they built. FJ

ELIZABETH BYRD WOOD is content manager at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
Book Review: *Made for Walking*

MATTHEW COODY

*Made for Walking: Density and Neighborhood Form*, a new book by Julie Campoli, a writer and urban designer, opens with an account of the daily commutes of the Russ family across the urban sprawl of the decidedly un-walkable Houston, Tex. As a native Houstonian I can attest to, and sympathize with, the conditions that force the average American to make roughly four car trips a day, racking up 14,000 miles a year behind the wheel. But about six years ago I moved to New York City, and I am now one of the tiny fraction of Americans who make daily use of public transportation, and one of the 8 percent who make routine trips by foot. I am allowed this lifestyle because, for the most part, the urban form of New York City, unlike Houston, is designed to be experienced on foot. If one envisions the typical New York City neighborhood, it is one where sidewalks are densely lined with vibrant and functional spaces; buildings adjoin and uses stack vertically; space is maximized and allocated in small, human-scaled units; and everything one needs or wants is nearby and easily accessible. Walking is enjoyable, with constantly changing scenery and diverse experiences.

*Made for Walking* contains more than 450 street-level views that convey the feeling of 12 walkable North American neighborhoods, including a montage of one street from each neighborhood, allowing the reader to envision a sample thoroughfare. Comparative diagrams measure different factors of density, including figure/ground diagrams, service diagrams, intersection density diagrams, population density diagrams, green space/pedestrian network diagrams, and neighborhood pattern diagrams. The main thesis of
Made for Walking suggests that the key elements in creating a walkable neighborhood are diversity, density, design, distance to transit, and destination accessibility (the “Five Ds”). Parking is also thrown in the mix, so officially it is “Five Ds and a P,” though that does not have quite the same ring to it. Campoli argues that these elements make the biggest impact when they work together, and the 12 neighborhoods she highlights are those in which they successfully do. These neighborhoods are the following:

- LoDo and the Central Platte Valley, Denver, Colo.
- Short North, Columbus, Ohio
- Kitsilano, Vancouver, British Columbia
- Flamingo Park, Miami Beach, Fla.
- Little Portugal, Toronto, Ontario
- Eisenhower East, Alexandria, Va.
- Downtown and Raynolds Addition, Albuquerque, N.M.
- The Pearl District, Portland, Ore.
- Greenpoint, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- Little Italy, San Diego, Calif.
- Old Pasadena, Pasadena, Calif.

By integrating quantifiable measures of density with a more nuanced, abstract portrayal of what makes neighborhoods successful, Campoli shows how urban form affects countless areas of our daily lives. Through the lens of walkability, her writings and case studies advocate for compact development that can be incorporated in a variety of regions and climates. Despite an innate preservation-minded thesis (of which I will explain more later) Made for Walking is not overtly preservation-focused; it is mainly devoted to convincing readers of the benefits of higher density urban living and its correlation to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and VMT (annual vehicle miles travelled). Of course, with increasing energy costs and a quickly degrading environment, this is a significant and laudable goal. But what will be more interesting to those working in the preservation field is how these density issues overlap with and reinforce the merits of historic preservation.
**WALKABILITY AND THE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD**

Campoli proposes that those neighborhoods designed to be experienced on foot are inevitably those to which people become attached and cherish over time. And these neighborhoods, she points out, are usually historic, surviving from the pre-automotive era. This older fabric has inherent lessons to impart to new and infill development, many of which she outlines in the book. She argues that the “good bones” that have made these neighborhoods successful should be preserved and, going further, can be emulated to create more appealing neighborhoods that are made for walking.

All 12 of Campoli’s models of successful urban walkable neighborhoods exhibit features that are directly related to the neighborhoods’ historic fabric and their organic evolution over time. Campoli seems to offer a tip sheet on how to design a walkable neighborhood, however, she has no qualms in stating that these neighborhoods simply cannot be created from scratch. This gives
preservationists a useful weapon in fighting large-scale urban redevelopment projects that attempt to create a successful neighborhood from a tabula rasa, while merely replacing historic forms that were often already successful and much loved.

Campoli’s studies will also be useful to those preservationists who advocate for infill development that is appropriate to its historic surroundings. Campoli does not go so far as to specifically delineate material choice or an infill building’s appropriateness to historic styles, but her guidelines for creating new development within and near historic neighborhoods call for responding to the area’s character. In urging human-scale, site-specific design, and consistency in form, Campoli’s tips echo preservationist tendencies.

There are other preservation-related arguments in *Made for Walking* that are worth mentioning. Working together, and sometimes overlapping with the “Five Ds,” Campoli also suggests that six qualities make neighborhoods walkable: connections, tissue (or how land is divided), density of housing and population, services, streetscape, and green networks. Tissue and streetscape—stalwart preservation buzzwords—are those qualities with the most applicability to the field, and Campoli has some interesting insights into both. In fact, *Made for Walking* is worth a read, if just for the sections that delve into such topics as how fine-grained tissue reinforces the preservation of place-making character, and how appealing streetscapes can be created through strict adherence to design guidelines.

This last point, however, seems to undermine some of her claims; although design guidelines are necessarily a major aspect of the preservation field, I tend to believe that inconsistencies in form are part of the charm of walking through many neighborhoods. But Campoli is correct in stating that buildings set the tone and character of a streetscape and that the design of a facade affects the walkability of a neighborhood. Historic urban architecture and building types were geared toward the pedestrian, and they continue to work effectively in creating walkable neighborhoods, powerfully demonstrating their adaptability and undercuts the argument that historic building forms are obsolete. Therefore, while *Made for Walking* is more focused on the interrelation of urban
planning and “green” neighborhoods, in using historic neighborhoods as models to create more walkable cities of the future, the book’s lessons can add another dimension to the standard preservation treatise and therefore lend firmer ground to our stances.

CLOSE TO HOME: GREENPOINT, BROOKLYN
I happen to live in one of Campoli’s 12 model neighborhoods: Greenpoint, Brooklyn. As the densest city in the United States, New York City would seem to need few lessons in density and the appeal of walkable neighborhoods. But the city did not escape the 20th-century’s suburban flight and shrinking densities that went hand-in-hand with the widespread proliferation of automobile use. Years of subsequent disinvestment and misguided planning policies took their toll, eating away at the intricately connected urban fabric. But over the past few decades, New York City has reversed this trend, resuscitating its dense, diverse, walkable neighborhoods and recycling its historic buildings.

Greenpoint, Brooklyn, has emerged as a shining example of the type of neighborhood for which Campoli advocates. It exemplifies most of her guidelines and furthermore, does so within a historic context. Greenpoint has two historic districts and a handful of individual landmarks designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the National Register of Historic Places. Containing well-preserved wood, brick, and stone buildings of various types and styles constructed from the 1850s to 1940s, the historic architecture of Greenpoint reflects its distinctive origins as the industrial center of Brooklyn. Industry and shipyard owners and workers settled in the area, creating an assemblage of grand row houses and more modest tenements and apartment houses that survive to present day. The area also contains significant commercial architecture and an excellent collection of ecclesiastic buildings that reflects 19th-century Brooklyn as the “City of Churches.”

I co-founded Preservation Greenpoint in 2012 to help protect this historic architecture and preserve the character of the neighborhood, a timely endeavor as Greenpoint has been primed for redevelopment since the 2005 North Brooklyn rezoning.
Campoli explains that this rezoning allows for the conversion of a million square feet of existing industrial capacity, with more than 7,000 new housing units and 250,000 square feet of new retail space. In some places the rezoning calls for 40-story residential buildings where currently stand low-scale residential and industrial structures. One such development project is slated to break ground this summer and includes numerous high-density towers on the sites of parking lots or one-to-two story industrial buildings. Called Greenpoint Landing, the development will occupy 22 waterfront acres, with 4.2 million square feet of mixed-use buildings, 4,000 to 5,000 housing units, and 10 towers rising 30 to 40 stories. Renderings are vague and glossy, but are clearly and shockingly out of character with the surrounding neighborhood.

*Made for Walking* is therefore prescient for Greenpoint in its arguments for proper development that is dense, but not necessarily out-of-scale with its context. While the site for this specific development does not include historically or architecturally significant buildings, the proposal should address the fact that it adjoins a low-scale historic neighborhood that has successfully proven its functionality. There are few concrete details about Greenpoint Landing, but as they emerge it will be interesting to compare how this new development stacks up against Campoli’s guidelines for a successful neighborhood.

The development will likely greatly benefit from the “good bones” that have been long established in Greenpoint, but what will it be contributing to the area? Will this development build upon the networks and patterns of the neighborhood or ignore them? Will a dramatically increased population overburden our limited transit services?
or will this instigate a long-awaited expansion of bus routes, ferry service, and bike paths? Will the proposal’s green spaces be vibrant public areas or will they merely be amenities for Greenpoint Landing residents? These questions lead me to believe that *Made for Walking* should be required reading for planners of such large-scale developments. Such projects would surely benefit from careful study of its theories.

**BROADENING THE PRESERVATIONIST TOOLKIT**

While it is a multi-layered combination of characteristics—and some may argue an inexplicable and un-replicable combination—that create successful neighborhoods, the innate livability and vibrancy that is linked with walkability is displayed to great effect in Campoli’s book. And it is an argument well worth attention. For all her optimism, Campoli warns that the prevailing American mindset fails to grasp pedestrian scale, and that this mindset, paired with almost a century of designing for automobiles, may be the largest obstacle in replicating the patterns of our most-loved walkable urban spaces.

*Made for Walking* works to reverse this mindset, showing the inherent advantages of pre-automobile architecture and urban forms and how we can attempt to replicate them. It gives another facet to the preservation ideology, and one that is not often heard in the context of the field. Read *Made for Walking* and see how it can influence your own neighborhood. Urban preservationists in particular will benefit from many of the theories she proposes, and broadening our toolkit to effectively work with the powerful forces of development is an endeavor well worth undertaking. FJ

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