



BENEFITS OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS

KEY MESSAGES

February 17, 2016

Core Message 1: Historic districts are strengthening communities and driving people back to cities. Across America, from Cleveland and Buffalo to Portland and Pittsburgh, a growing number of people – led by the young, diverse, millennial generation – are choosing to live, work, and play in historic neighborhoods.

Stat: According to the World Bank report, *The Economics of Uniqueness*, “[heritage-related projects] contribute to urban livability, attracting talent, and providing an enabling environment for job creation.”

Story: When asked why they moved to these areas, residents often talk about the desire to live somewhere distinctive, to be *some place* rather than *no place*. They want things like windows that open, exposed brick, and walkable communities, and continually use words like “charm” and “authenticity” to describe what they are looking for in where they live.

Soundbite: Americans today want their homes and workplaces to be unique and distinctive – exactly the kind of distinctiveness, character, and sense of place that historic preservation districts provide.

Core Message 2: Historic preservation districts provide benefits to people, whether or not they actually own a home in them. And, historic preservation districts help tell the story of our nation in all its complexity and diversity.

Story: No one would argue that certain historic districts feature grand historic homes and affluent residents. But for every Georgetown or Beacon Hill, there are places like Eatonville, Florida or Detroit’s Corktown - modest communities that have been home to generations of working class families. The history embedded in these communities is just as important, and just as worthy of our full preservation efforts.

Stat: Author Ned Kaufman, in his 2006 book, “Race, Place and Story” (p. 324) found that if gentrifying places in New York - such as the lower east side, the lower west side, and various neighborhoods in Brooklyn - had been historic preservation districts, some of the hardships experienced there by long-time residents could have been slowed.

Soundbite: Around the country, preservation projects are expanding housing options, helping cities becoming more affordable, and demonstrating that history, sustainability, fairness, & economic vitality can all go hand-in-hand. We should not scapegoat historic preservation districts – one of our best tools for preserving density and smart, vibrant growth – for an affordability crisis whose origins lay elsewhere.

Core Message 3: Preservation is about keeping buildings alive, in active use, and relevant to the needs of the people and the cities that surround them.

Story: To best accomplish this, often zoning and building regulations need to be modernized and made more flexible, and regulatory barriers to building reuse lifted. When done correctly, this can elevate and accelerate cities' efforts to remake themselves, through their existing historic fabric.

Stat: For example, Baltimore's local preservation commission recently changed its window replacement guidelines when original materials have deteriorated beyond repair. The revised guidelines increase the number of replacement options and allow the preservation commission the flexibility to consider site conditions when making decisions.

Soundbite: Our research shows that all over America, preservation projects and historic districts are expanding housing options, helping cities become more affordable, and demonstrating that history, sustainability, fairness and economic vitality can all go hand-in-hand. To risk these benefits with misguided statewide initiatives would be shortsighted and harmful to the very communities these elected representatives serve.

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