



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

Policy Guide on Historic and Cultural Resources

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Findings

Over the past decade the scope of historic preservation practice has broadened to protect a greater array of cultural resources including historic districts, buildings, structures, sites, public works, transportation corridors, archaeological sites, heritage areas and corridors, cultural landscapes, objects and related built forms. Planners conduct these activities as part of a comprehensive planning framework that combines the benefits of preservation with other community planning objectives.

Planning and preservation work hand in hand to ensure the conservation of housing stock in residential neighborhoods, economic development and revitalization (including the preservation and revitalization of downtowns), protection of historic landscapes, and preservation and growth management of rural villages, and conservation of farmland.

In an era of profound change, the threat to these non-renewable historic resources is accelerating, requiring innovative planning solutions. These threats include:

- Diminished funding for preservation at the federal and state levels.
- The impact of transportation projects on cultural resources.
- Legislative enactments designed to preempt state and local preservation laws.
- The private property rights movement and its attack on preservation programs at the local level.
- Development resulting in either demolition or retention only of building facades.
- Ignorance of archaeological resources.
- Subordination of historic preservation to other design concerns.

Repeated cutbacks in Federal funding and reduced tax incentives — combined with a lack of understanding concerning the economic benefits of preservation — have sapped valuable energy from America's preservation movement. At the same time, planners have a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on positive developments that are building the constituency for preservation, including:

- A greater role for preservation in rural revitalization, economic development, and finance initiatives driven by the private sector.
- An increased commitment to the principle of adaptive reuse, ensuring that architectural and historic resources are economically viable contributors to their communities.
- Growing cooperation between professional disciplines, lay groups, and their organizations to promote effective preservation strategies at the national, state, and local levels.
- Increased availability of environmental laws and programs as a resource.
- Emerging preservation strategies that address and interpret the histories and cultural legacy of all segments in society without regard to ethnicity, religion, or social strata.

- Growing use of preservation tools as a means to accomplish other desirable objectives: more compact communities, neighborhood conservation and cohesion, economic development and tourism.
- Greater programming of Intermodal Surface Transportation Act (ISTEA) funds for enhancements that build on the foundations of neighborhood conservation and preservation planning.
- Greater use of tax benefits to promote preservation of communities.

Policy Guide Principles

1. To achieve the full integration of preservation and planning practice, the American Planning Association and its chapters believe planners must assume greater responsibility to use the range of preservation techniques and options. This means:

- a. At all levels of government, planners need to work with the private sector, independent organizations and citizens to increase awareness of, and to protect and enhance the nation's historic resources. Ideally, this should occur at the earliest possible stage of a comprehensive planning process, before deterioration creates an insurmountable burden for the community and property owners.
- b. Planners need to encourage communities to recognize the value of historic resources as major contributions to the quality of life and to cultural vitality, and as resources that both remind us about our past and provide a stimulus to economic vitality and the potential for tourism.

2. APA National and chapter support funding of programs for the preservation of the nation's historic resources at all levels of government.

The components of the programs should include:

- a. an ongoing survey and evaluation process;
- b. protective legislation, expressed in clear and reasonable standards and based on qualified expert opinion or acknowledged resources in the field;
- c. financial incentives to encourage rehabilitation and restoration;
- d. historic preservation plan development;
- e. adequate budget allocations for qualified staff in public agencies;
- f. cooperative educational efforts with the private sector and citizen groups; and
- g. interdisciplinary participation and alliances of planners with other professionals in fields related to historic preservation.
- h. Coordination of preservation initiatives with education, citizen participation, history, public art, and other programs such as ISTEA II.
- i. Implementation strategies capable of protecting, enhancing, and extending the benefit of cultural resources for future generations.
- j. Provisions (in the form of ordinance or policy) to secure temporary delays to the alteration or demolition of designated cultural resources until their preservation or protection may be fully explored.
- k. Adaptive reuse policies supported by tax or other incentives.

3. APA National and Chapters support budget allocations that will insure that the federal government will facilitate preservation efforts by providing adequate appropriations to implement federally-mandated processes, to support state historic preservation offices, and to encourage preservation activities at all governmental levels.

4. APA National and Chapters support efforts by local governments to integrate preservation into the land planning process, including incorporating preservation goals into the community master plan and reconciling and coordinating preservation policies with local development policies.

The reasons for this support are that a sound preservation program must be based on a survey, an historic preservation ordinance and plan, and economic and technical assistance in coordination with other community policies and ordinances. Local governments should work with citizens and local interest groups to make preservation part of the overall effort to foster and promote the general welfare of the community.

5. APA Chapters support local government budget allocations for qualified staff for historic preservation commissions and to provide funding for the certified local government program.

6. APA and its Chapters support the equal application of preservation laws cultural and historic resources without regard to form or nature of ownership, religious or cultural affiliation.

7. APA Chapters support state enabling legislation to provide tax incentives to encourage the rehabilitation of historic resources, including tax credits and tax abatements.

8. APA Chapters support budget allocations that will insure state involvement in integrating tourism considerations as appropriate with historic preservation efforts, particularly in the assessment and sensitive adaptation of viable resources.

9. APA and its Chapters support historic preservation programs that are holistic in scope, meaning that they:

- a. Seek to involve all elements of the community in planning, development, implementation, and feedback.
- b. Strive to interpret history and cultural heritage in the most inclusive sense possible, reaching across barriers of race, ethnicity, religion, class, or income.
- c. Seek to protect not only the resources itself, but its context in the larger community by ensuring that preservation of significant structures is not limited to preservation of a building's "skin" without adequate consideration of its other component parts and history.

10. APA and its chapters believe that an understanding of cultural resource issues is integral to the practice of planning, and therefore support the inclusion of preservation and cultural resources as a core component of urban and regional planning curricula.

11. APA and its chapters recognize that neighborhoods are dynamic objects that evolve rather than remain fixed in time; therefore, they support preservation strategies that respect the heritage, context, design and scale of older neighborhoods while recognizing the evolution of those neighborhoods' built form.

12. APA and its chapters believe that the goals of affordable housing and good preservation practice are mutually inclusive. APA supports gentrification provided that the tools of preservation are used as methods for inclusion, not exclusion; protection, not displacement; and encouragement of affordable housing and infill projects, not their prohibition.

13. APA and its chapters support the coordination of comprehensive planning programs and implementation tools (zoning, subdivision, and land development) with state preservation legislation (facade controls tax incentives, and other tools). Beyond the minimum standards expressed in paragraph 2 above, these programs should utilize a variety of tools which may include (but are not limited to):

- a. Transfer of development rights;
- b. Expansion of clustering and planned unit development to increase opportunities for landmarking, village preservation, and historic districts;

- c. Preservation of village settlement patterns as a desirable means to promote community character and diversity.

14. APA and its chapters support an enhanced role for the private sector to bring its resources and talents to bear in forming effective cultural resource strategies.

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NOTE: The implementation of actions at the state level is at the initiative of the chapter.