HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

Preserving the Past, Planning for the Future
Historic Districts Council's 13th Annual Preservation Conference
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For the past 13 years, the Historic Districts Council (HDC), the advocate for New York City's historic districts and for neighborhoods meriting preservation, has hosted a lively conversation among preservationists. Each year, the discussions focus on an issue or set of issues currently facing the historic preservation movement. The 2007 conference looked beyond the existing trends in the historic preservation field to examine the role of preservation in the future of New York City.

The conference's discussions revolved around two current buzzwords in the world of architecture and planning – sustainable design and community-based planning. Simeon Bankoff, Executive Director of HDC, opened the event noting that the conference's topics, including sustainable design, planning, and economic development, stretch the traditional role of preservation. However, the following panels in fact proved that these realms are not at all a stretch for preservationists, even if the correlation has not been previously realized. For years, preservationists have been successfully following the principles of sustainable design and have been dealing with planning and economic development issues.

Historic Preservation and Sustainability

One of the overarching themes of the conference was how historic preservation and sustainability/green buildings are intrinsically linked, even if this is not always recognized by design professionals, planners, the public, and even preservationists themselves. Therefore preservationists now have the dual challenge of acquainting themselves with their own successes in the field of sustainability and then making these achievements known to a larger audience.

The conference's keynote address was delivered by Donovan Rypkema, principal of the real estate and economic development consulting firm PlaceEconomics, which specializes in the economics of preservation, and a leader in research and writing on sustainability and historic preservation. Rypkema's talk focused almost entirely on historic preservation and sustainability and emphasized four main points
1) Sustainable development is more than environmentalism;
2) A green building is not the same thing as sustainable design;
3) Preservation IS sustainable design; and
4) Development without preservation is not sustainable. To read the entire keynote address, click here.

Architects Stephen Tilly, principal of Stephen Tilly, Architect, an architecture, planning, preservation, and landscape architecture firm in Dobbs Ferry, New York, and Carl Elefante, a principal at Quinn Evans Architects in Washington D.C. and the firm's Director of Sustainable Design, furthered the sustainable design discussion in the panel, "The Greening of Preservation." Both architects provided examples of their work at the intersection of historic preservation and sustainable design, stressing that preservation is not just about restoring the architectural details of a building. Also on this panel was sculptor, former Planning Director of Salt Lake City, and acting director of the Center for the Living City at Purchase College, Stephen Goldsmith. Goldsmith, who was not formally trained as a planner or preservationist, nonetheless has intertwined sustainable design and preservation through his projects.

One major tenet of historic preservation is the reuse or adaptation of old buildings for today's world. In other words, historic preservation is the ultimate recycling. In his keynote, Rypkema used the term "embodied energy," meaning the total energy expenditure in the construction of a building or production of a material. When factoring in embodied energy, the value of preservation in sustainable design becomes all the more clear. For example, the narrowly defined "green" building calculations only take into consideration the annual amount of energy a building uses and does not consider the energy used to build the building in the first place. When a building is recycled and restored, the embodied energy of the building is maintained. On the contrary, if a historic building is demolished, all of the energy that went into its construction is wasted and lost. In addition, because historic materials like brick, plaster, and timber require the least amount of energy in their preparation for construction, they are much more sustainable than processed modern materials like aluminum, vinyl, and steel, all of which require a great deal of energy in their creation.

A great example of embodied energy is historic windows. Windows have long been a point of contention for preservationists, as an historic, old window is so important to the character and design of historic buildings. Many battles have been fought between preservationists and building owners who want to replace rather than repair their windows. Debunking a popular myth, Rypkema stated that not much energy is lost through old or inefficientwindows. In fact, most heat and energy is lost in buildings through the attic area, and even a modest investment in attic insulation will do much more for a building's energy efficiency than new thermal paned windows. Moreover, a historic window that has been restored properly has the same energy-efficiency as a new window. Trashing old windows means wasting trees and wood, and in essence means bulldozing energy. In addition, manufacturing new vinyl windows entails a lot of energy that is not necessarily compensated through their resulting energy efficiency.

Rypkema stated that 30% of the windows that are replaced are less than ten years old, and he concluded that new windows are simply not long-lasting and people are too quick to replace windows. Elefante also noted that in an historic window, the glass can either be repaired or recycled, and old wood windows have pieces that can be easily replaced if necessary. They are both renewable and repairable. On the other hand, aluminum windows have an assembly where each piece is dependent on the others, making it difficult, if not impossible, to repair and easier just to replace aluminum windows entirely. Although new windows are often marketed as "maintenance free," Elefante emphasized that "anything that is maintenance free cannot be repaired."

Moreover, historic windows are the perfect example of how sustainability is not just about the environment; it is also about economic and cultural sustainability. Rypkema pointed out that when one repairs rather than replaces materials like windows, more often that not more money is spent locally, which is a key aspect to economic sustainability. In addition, retaining and restoring historic fabric also means cultural sustainability, as keeping the old visually makes a community have more local character and pride. Sustainability for the future requires economic, environmental, and social/cultural responsibility. Two of these can create livable communities, but all three, according to Rypkema, mean equitable responsibility.

Goldsmith added the term "embodied story" to the discussion of embodied energy. Every historic building or historic material has a story within it to convey, and when historic materials are lost, gone are the history it has witnessed, the mark of the people who built and used it, and its embodied story. Although the embodied story is not always obvious, it is always there, and people are often subconsciously aware of it. As an example, Goldsmith spoke about a temporary park he designed in Salt Lake City. The city had recently demolished a historic building on the site and wanted a temporary park put in while plans for the new development were completed. In his design, Goldsmith used building fragments left over from the building's demolition and other demolition debris to define the park space. Although a new building replaced the park over a decade ago, people to still talk about how it affected them. The "embodied story" of the demolished historic building was enhanced through the park, and in turn, that embodied story continues this day in the memories of those that experienced it.

More recently, Goldsmith, through the Center for the Living City, has been working in post-Katrina New Orleans. During his visits, Goldsmith began to think about all the debris and scraps left over from the storm. Rather than trashing all of the debris from Hurricane Katrina, he thought about how the scraps could be constructively reused, and the Katrina Furniture Project was born. The project aims to both reduce the amount of debris that is slated for landfills and to provide employment opportunities and new construction skills for those in need in New Orleans. Rather than demolishing buildings, the local residents were taught to deconstruct those buildings that were beyond repair so that the materials could be re-used in other construction. Much of the waste material around the city is very old, with eighteenth-century Cyprus wood planks not uncommon; despite their age, the materials' usefulness has yet to diminish. Moreover, the so-called waste material has both embodied energy and a vast amount of embodied story.

Out of this harvested material, local residents, as trained by members of the Katrina Furniture Project, now create furniture. The pieces include step stools, symbolic of empowering the people of New Orleans and the lift the project is giving. Also constructed from the debris are church pews. Nearly one thousand churches were destroyed in the region due to Hurricane Katrina, and the new church pews offset the rebuilding costs of the places of worship and help to pass along to the churches the centuries of human spirit that have kept the city alive. Each piece of furniture is marked with the signatures of the craftspeople who made them and a symbol of the neighborhood in which they originated, giving a clue to future owners of the furniture's embodied story.

Goldsmith's projects show how preservation projects, however small, can help revitalize cities. A major point that Rypkema drove home was that no revitalization project can be successful without historic preservation. Historic preservation has always played a key role in successful revitalization efforts, and in those instances when revitalization has failed, the loss of historic buildings has always been a key culprit. Rypkema challenged the audience to think of an instance when a revitalization effort had failed in which there were no loss of historic buildings and in which historic preservation played a key role, as he knew of none.

In the last panel of the conference, *The Future of New York: With Preservation or Without?*, the issue of the role in preservation in the revitalization of New York City was addressed. Roberta Gratz, urban critic, writer, and NYC Landmarks Preservation Commissioner, noted that it has been over thirty years since the famous *Daily News* headline, "Ford to City: Drop Dead." Not too long ago, everyone had given up on New York City and America's urban centers as a whole. However, it was preservationists in NYC's historic neighborhoods that stayed, recognized the possibilities of the city's neighborhoods, and turned around New York. While their efforts were small and local, they added up to big changes. Jeffrey Kroessler, president and founder of the Queensborough Preservation League and a vice president of HDC, further added in this panel that at the time of New York City's urban and fiscal crisis, the city government was doing nothing. The municipality was planning shrinkage; assuming that the population would decrease, there was no maintenance of parks, schools were closed, and entire neighborhoods were abandoned. It is easy to forget how bad it was – the crime then is unimaginable today. However, it was the middle, working, creative class that stayed and demanded that the city restore the services it had stopped providing. It is these people that believed in the city and their neighborhood's urban fabric that helped to revitalize it.

On a larger economic scale, as globalization becomes part of the reality of the twenty-first century, preservation's role becomes all the more important. Towns must now be globally competitive in order to survive. Two key components in a town's attractiveness are livability and quality of live, and sustainability and historic preservation are key aspects of both. Rypkema stated that globalization has two parts – economic globalization and cultural globalization – and he argued that while economic globalization is good, cultural globalization is bad. Historic preservation can mean enhancing economic globalization – or being able to compete in today's global economy – while discouraging cultural globalization by promoting and celebrating a local culture and heritage.

To Rypkema, historic preservation means having viable, livable, and equitable cities, and historic preservation means environmental responsibility. Elefante pointed out that the guiding principles of the preservation movement, the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, already contain within them the basic tenets of sustainability. They include “Preservation” or to “retain”; “Restoration” or to “replenish”; “Reconstruction” or to “replace”; and “Rehabilitation” or to “Renew.” Rypkema remarked that many Americans pride themselves as being environmentally responsible when they recycle their soda cans. However, they have no problem with the demolition of historic buildings, which adds so much waste to our landfills that all the soda can recycling is negated. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that over one-third of all the waste in the United States comes from building debris.

Just as preservationists are all too often outside of the environmental movement, they are also marginalized from the smart growth movement. Rypkema noted that the key principles of smart growth are quality housing, walkability, collaboration with the people who live there, a mixture of land use, and the preservation of open space. All of these things already exist within historic neighborhoods. Rypkema further emphasized that Smart growth without a preservation component is simply STUPID Growth.

Similarly, in the green building movement there is widespread misconception that green buildings are synonymous with sustainable design. Rypkema stated that in the preservationists’ rush to jump on the green building bandwagon, we have lost site of what sustainability really is. He pointed to the skewed point system of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification process, a green building rating system, which does not give adequate weight to re-use of existing buildings.

Both Elefante and Tilly provided examples of projects where they have restored old buildings and their inherent sustainable functionality. Elefante stated that most historic buildings were designed originally with the three key components of green design: Systems Integration; Climate Response Design; and Site/Building Integration. In terms of energy use, most old buildings were designed with a sophistication of thought rather than a sophistication of technology, making the buildings integrated with the environment in a way that most new buildings are not. This is most commonly illustrated through the design of a building’s heating, cooling, and ventilation system. Historic buildings relied on natural ventilation and systems to keep them cool during the summer and warm in the winter. Over the years, as technology advanced, many of the natural ventilations systems in historic buildings were altered and replaced with seemingly improved and more advanced systems. The result was that the original and usually quite effective and energy efficient ventilation systems were replaced with those that in the end used up more energy. By restoring the natural ventilation systems of historic buildings, truly green design can be achieved.

Elefante provided a classic example of a sophistication of thought for a building’s climate control, the Eastern Market building in Washington, D.C., designed by Adolph Cluss. At the time of the presentation, the Eastern Market had been in continuous operation since its construction in 1873, but on April 30, 2007, a devastating fire resulted in its closure. (It is expected that the building will reopen as a market in 2008 or 2009.) Nonetheless, the building, a National Historic Landmark, was originally designed with a sophistication of thought for ventilation. As designed in the nineteenth century, the market was one large room, resembling a barn, and was cooled via passive air condition from ice storage below the market floor. Over the last century, the ventilation was "improved" via the installation of heat-generating equipment. In addition, the skylight, integral to the ventilation of the building, was covered. As part of the restoration of the building, Elefante and his team of architects restored to the extent possible the natural ventilation of the market, thereby using less energy and returning the "green" to the building.

Tilly's discussion of green design and historic preservation emphasized that 1) Green is Old; 2) Old is Green; and 3) To Make Old Greener, one has to figure out what makes it green and one cannot introduce the new. At the Shearith Israel synagogue on the Upper West Side, Tilly's firm oversaw the restoration of the building's 1897 interior. After extensive cleaning of the synagogue's darkened and dreary interior, the result was a restored, brightened space that required much less artificial light, and therefore less energy, than in decades past. Likewise, at the Lyndhurst mansion in Tarrytown, New York, Tilly and his colleagues discovered sixty-nine original vents designed in 1838 by the house's architect, Alexander Jackson Davis. During the course of the house's restoration, the architect unblocked many of the vents, thereby restoring the energy-saving, passive ventilation system of the house as well as its architecture. To view Tilly's steps to "greening" a site, click here.

Both architects offered new mottos for the historic preservation movement for the twenty-first century: Elefante's "The greenest building is the one that is already built," and Tilly's "Everything old is green again." A new motto may just be what preservationists need to get the wide American public to see the importance of preservation. It is not just the public, however, that needs to be convinced, as our government and policy makers also need to be educated on the subject. Moreover, despite the simplicity and accessibility of these proposed mottos, historic preservationists have a long way to go in terms of truly being a part of the sustainable design movement. Even though historic preservationists, while unwittingly, have long been huge proponents of sustainable design, they have not done an adequate job of illustrating this to the environmentalists, the sustainable design proponents, or to the public at large. In order to be relevant in the twenty-first century, preservationists have to take it upon themselves to make sure that this notion is widely understood.

Tilly remarked that convincing the public and policy makers of the inherent link between preservation and sustainable design is a challenge, but preservationists can learn from the green building proponents and their focus on education. Preservationists, in his opinion, are too bashful and need to put more emphasis on promoting their role in green and sustainable design. Rypkema emphasized that preservationists ARE and have long been the sustainable design movement. One-hundred percent of preservation actions advance the cause of the environment. Sustainability is stewardship, and preservationists are stewards of the built environment. The challenge is to make that known to a larger audience.

Preservation and the Role of Community Input in Planning for the Future of New York?
While the conference's discussion of sustainable design spoke broadly about the field of preservation, the conference's second theme of preservation and planning focused on the intersection of these fields in the future of New York City. Speakers in the panel, *Smart (?) Growth: Brooklyn in the 21st Century*, discussed the recent failure of how to utilize historic preservation, community based planning, and smart growth principles in the borough. The concluding panel of the conference, *The Future of New York: With Preservation or Without?*, was a lively debate about the effects of economic boom in New York City on its neighborhoods and whether the city's revitalization has been too successful, leaving those who turned around New York out in the cold. It also touched upon what role preservation should take in planning for New York City's future growth.

Examining the recent failures to implement smart growth and preservation in Brooklyn projects can hopefully help preservationists better involve themselves in future large-scale planning initiatives in New York City. The Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, the Atlantic Yards project, and the Ikea site in Red Hook were used to illustrate how the public planning process did not adequately protect historic resources, community sustainability, and waterfront resources in these large-scale redevelopment projects. Lisa Kersavage, the Kress/RFR Fellow for Historic Preservation at the Municipal Art Society (MAS), has followed the major development sites in Brooklyn and has analyzed the general development trends in the borough during the last few years as it has faced tremendous redevelopment and growth.

There have been 10 recent major rezonings in Brooklyn – two of them were upzones and eight were downzones. Despite these downzones, development has been rampant. Kersavage noted that in 2005, the Brooklyn Department of Buildings issued an average of five demolition permits and four new building permits every day (MAS maps 1. and 2.). These permits were usually issued in the areas that were under consideration for downzoning (but not yet downzoned) and were rarely issued for properties in one of the borough's 16 historic districts. Ron Shiffman, a city planner with over 45 years of experience in community-based planning, clarified Kersavage's remarks, noting that the boom Brooklyn is experiencing is not necessarily the result of recent rezonings. The boom is the result of the attractiveness of the borough because of its diversity of people, land-uses, and buildings. However, he believes that rather than enhancing this diversity, the rezonings only serve to stifle it.

For areas considered for upzoning, the city is required to do an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to assess impact of the change on the neighborhood's environment, including its historic resources. Despite the official mandate to include community input, the EIS process is still a top-down approach to planning, meaning that the public is not truly engaged. Shiffman noted that the planning process needs to be reversed if communities are going to be nurtured.

Currently, the planning process is backwards, evidenced by the fact that the planning identification of historic resources only happens when a major change is proposed and an EIS is required. More planning needs to be done up front by the community before developers enter the picture, and the community, not the developer, should condition new projects.

In the 1980s, Shiffman worked with the Greenpoint-Williamsburg community to develop a community-based 197-A plan. At that time, there were severe problems with toxic sites and chemical pollution in the area. However, these problems were used as an excuse to stymie the community. The goals of the community's plan were to retain jobs and promote clean manufacturing uses, to provide additional areas for new residential development, and to provide public access to the waterfront. The community did not want a Battery Park City-type development; they wanted a true mixed-use district where bulk and height were controlled. Unfortunately, the rezoning that was ultimately adopted in 2005 for the Greenpoint-Williamsburg area did not live up to these goals. Instead, it creates a new neighborhood along the lines of the principles of Battery Park City and its superblocks. The plan did include some affordable housing bonuses through inclusionary zoning, but not nearly enough. Moreover, the plan called for little if no retention of existing buildings and included no new building for people who currently live in the neighborhood. In essence, rather than enhancing it, the Greenpoint-Williamsburg plan in fact suppresses the existing mixture and diversity of the neighborhood.

Kersavage added that the EIS document for the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, like those produced for the Downtown Brooklyn and Red Hook Ikea site upzonings, failed to identify vast numbers of historic resources. For example, the city's Greenpoint-Willliamsburg EIS identified just eight known and twelve potential historic resources in the one and half mile stretch of waterfront blocks. Meanwhile, Kersavage and her colleagues at MAS found 263 potential historic resources within the same area when they did their own survey. Among the buildings that the EIS failed to identify were a rare extant cooperage, worker houses, and cast-iron-fronted buildings.

Kersavage noted that already the effects of the rezoning, which now permit the construction of tall residential towers on former manufacturing sites, can be seen. Several historic buildings have been lost, including the Greenpoint Terminal Market and the Old Dutch Mustard Factory. The NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission now seems to be taking some interest in select Greenpoint-Williamsburg buildings. However, as has happened in other areas like Downtown Brooklyn where the city designated four individual buildings as landmarks in conjunction with the rezoning, the obvious, and easy, historic buildings are being designated while many other smaller, but still incredibly significant, buildings are being left out in the cold. It is now a Herculean task to push for the designation of these smaller historic resources. Kersavage urged that neighborhoods must identify historic resources earlier, and the Landmarks Preservation

Commission needs to protect historic resources before rezonings.

Carter Crafter, director of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a bi-state coalition working to optimize waterfront land use and water quality in New York and New Jersey, pointed out that Greenpoint-Williamsburg is just one of the many neighborhoods along the East River undergoing massive changes. Other neighborhoods along the East River that are in transition include Hunts Point and the Ferry Point Park in the Bronx, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and Randall's Island. A mixed-use waterfront is required in order for the city to be sustainable, and while preservationists are already aware of the preservation failures in neighborhoods like Greenpoint-Williamsburg, they are less aware of the lost water opportunities. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance has therefore stepped in with guiding principles for the future of the East River waterfront: 1) Accessibility; 2) Environmental Stewardship; 3) Community-based planning; and 4) Placemaking.

Craft argued that preservationists and planners are not aware that the historic definition and diversity of the waterfront is being lost. For example, recent waterfront developments, like the Oceana along the boardwalk of Brighton Beach, are serving to stifle the mix of uses and people along the waterfront. This luxury residential development built a few years ago is a super block that in essence cuts off a large section of the Brighton Beach neighborhood from the boardwalk and the ocean, and vice versa. The development takes advantage of the views and proximity to the ocean, but does not promote or even allow direct access to the waterfront for anyone but the people who live there. Capitalizing on New York's waterfront does not mean cutting it off with new luxury apartments, as is what is happening at this Brighton Beach development and in Greenpoint-Williamsburg. Rather a "life cycle approach" needs to be taken and the design of the water's edge needs to be carefully considered. "Edge design," Craft clarified, does not mean accessorizing the waterfront, but making it functional.

The recent zoning change from manufacturing to allow big box retail at the Ikea site in Red Hook is another example of how the diversity of Brooklyn's waterfront neighborhoods is being lost in planning initiatives. Kersavage explained that this area is the site of the Erie Basin, built in the 1850s as the terminus of the Erie Canal, and until recently was the site of a dock used to repair ships. At 710-feet, the graving dock is one of the largest in the New York Harbor and was actively used until Ikea took over the site. In terms of sustainability, it would cost over $1 billion dollars to build a new graving dock that functions as this one did, and even if funding were available, it would be nearly next to impossible these days to get all the necessary permits. Hence once the graving dock is lost, there is little hope of another one replacing it. Such infrastructure, however, is vital if New York City is going to retain any role in the shipping industry in the New York Harbor. In the case of this development, shortsightedness unfortunately reigned.

In the keynote address, Rypkema stated that old structures should only be demolished if what is going to replace them is going to raise the collective quality of the building stock. At the Ikea site, 1.92 acre the graving dock is going to be demolished for a parking lot. In total, Ikea has 22-acres in Red Hook, and the company easily could have decked the parking and avoided the destruction of the graving dock. Kersavage and MAS tried to work with Ikea to find an adequate solution for parking that would allow the retention of the graving dock, but the company refused. No part of the government and public review process forced them to retain the graving dock, and the only mitigation that came out of the process was that Ikea will draw an outline of the dock on their parking lot to denote where the historic structure once was. Kersavage likened this to a chalk outline around a corpse in a murder scene. She reminded everyone that going forward the public needs to pressure politicians to exercise their powers to withhold permits and disapprove actions that harm our historic resources, like those on the Ikea site. (Note: Shortly after Ms. Kersavage's presentation at the 2007 Conference, Ikea completed its efforts to fill the graving dock with cement to make room for a large-scale parking lot).

Shiffman argued that we need to completely re-think poorly conceived projects like the Ikea development and the Atlantic Yards development, which includes a "parade of high rise buildings." Shiffman acknowledged that there is need to fill in the gap in Brooklyn neighborhoods caused by the Atlantic Yards. However, the current plan proposes to fill in the gap with a wall that will not tie the neighborhoods together. This is publicly owned land, but Shiffman pointed out that the public was not truly engaged in the planning process, nor will it benefit from it. The project also is a great misuse of eminent domain. Although to plan for the future the city may need to use eminent domain for public works, Shiffman argued that the Atlantic Yards project is not a public work. It is one private developer taking property from another private developer. Moreover, to call the area "blighted' is a joke. Shiffman questioned how an area can be blighted when apartments in the neighborhood cost $850,000, and the prices keep going up.

The Atlantic Yards debacle highlights why New York City must move from land-use based planning to performance based planning, and why it must nurture diversity. Shiffman stated, "New ideas need old buildings," but this concept is lost on many planners and government officials. Rypkema touched on this in his keynote address when he noted that historic buildings are incubators for small businesses. He stated that 85% of new jobs are in companies that have fewer than twenty employees. Small and start-up firms need historic buildings and the cheap rent and smaller spaces they often offer. In turn, these businesses provide use for older buildings, jobs for local residents, and neighborhood revitalization. Pioneer Square in Seattle is a famous example of a historic area revitalized successfully as a home to many small businesses. Clearly this idea has been lost in the major Brooklyn developments.

Many of the panelists spoke about balancing residential and manufacturing uses in rezonings and in planning for the future of New York, although not all panelists were in agreement on the issue. Shiffman stated that in order to grow right, the city has to consider both industrial and residential needs. He emphasized that the city also needs to build without displacing jobs and homes. Unless the city creates more flexibility in its zonings, it will become too difficult economically for small businesses to survive. The government needs to think of small industry and industrial buildings like family farms, creating tax credits and incentives for their retention. If the city is going to be sustainable for the future, New Yorkers need to manufacture and produce locally.

Julia Vitullo-Martin, a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute and Director of the Center for Rethinking Development, alternately stated that that a large part of the city is zoned for manufacturing, but much of this land is not needed for manufacturing uses and could be used for additional housing. Gratz, who is also an owner of a small manufacturing business, disagreed with her on the point, however, noting that the city for decades has not appreciated light manufacturers. There are many small manufacturing businesses, like furniture makers and accessory businesses for institutions like Broadway, but they are finding it harder to survive in the city. A variety of economy allows the city to absorb the economic downturns and is vitally important for sustainability. Gratz noted that if she were to close her business, the only other opportunities for her employees would be jobs at places like Walmart.

In talking about planning for the future of New York, many of the speakers mentioned PlaNYC 2030, a Bloomberg administration initiative that aims to prepare the city for the changes to come in the next couple of decades and for the additional one million people who are estimated to live in New York City by 2030. Shiffman applauded the Bloomberg administration's PlaNYC 2030 initiative, but stated that the goal of equity – social, economic, and cultural equity – is missing. Not only does the city need the infrastructure to handle the additional one million people by 2030, it is also going to need jobs, places to live, and a mixture of uses for these people, particularly those in the lower economic bracket. Moreover, the city must nurture production within the city so that not all goods need to be brought in via trucks. Craft noted that moving goods via water and making better use of our waterfront needs to be part of the 2030 plan. He also pointed out that the PlanNYC 2030 discussions are a great opportunity for preservationists to start to work more closely with the conservation and sustainable design movement.

Although most at the conference agreed that preservationists need to be more involved in planning for the future of New York, some of the panelists, who did not necessarily attend all of the conference discussions, thought differently. Vitullo-Martin disagreed that preservationists have a harder time today with having a voice in the larger planning initiatives in the city. In her view, there has been a tremendous shift in the last several decades, and she remarked that now everyone agrees on the importance of preservation. Although many of the panelists who have been in the trenches of these fights disagreed, Gratz noted that thirty years ago, the preservation movement and even the Landmarks Law itself was much weaker.

Alexander Garvin, a planner and real estate consultant, on the other hand, completely questioned the rationale for preservation in today's world. He noted that preservationists need to focus on the real reasons for historic preservation: 1) nostalgic desire; 2) a dislike for the new; and 3) the selfish quotient, sometimes also called NIMBYism. In Garvin's opinion, preservationists should focus on preserving places that are truly significant, have aesthetic prominence, or have scenic distinction. His list of examples of things that should be preserved, including Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia, and Yosemite National Park, represented a hyper traditional and narrow-minded view of preservation and ignored the fact that preservation thought and practice have evolved greatly over the last 70 years. Moreover, Garvin noted that not all of the designated landmarks that we have are great and that the value of those that are outstanding are cheapened when mediocre buildings are designated as landmarks.

Jeffrey Kroessler countered emphatically that preservation is not about selfishness, and it is not about NIMBYism. After all, he noted, if there is any selfishness in preservation, it is nothing compared to the selfishness of the free market. Gratz reminded Garvin that the entire day's discussion had revolved around preservation as an active, intrinsic, and vital part of sustainability and environmental responsibility. Preservation is not just about preserving the best and the most significant – it is sustainable development, and it is smart growth. The movement has moved beyond preserving places where George Washington slept, and preservationists now embrace a larger perspective. Gratz also argued that there is no such thing as NIMBYism. Most neighborhoods fighting development are not against all change. They are against the kind of change that hurts their neighborhood, and they are opposed to the process that shuts them out of planning for their neighborhood, like in the case of the Atlantic Yards and Greenpoint-Williamsburg projects.

Garvin, however, stated that people are confusing planning inadequacies with preservation failures, and planning inadequacies should not concern preservationists, in his opinion. In another bold statement, Garvin stated that the city's recent downzoning of about one-third to one-half of Staten Island has nothing to do with preservation. Rather, he believes the downzoning was about keeping people out of the borough's neighborhoods that the locals did not want. Not surprisingly, Queens Council Member Tony Avella, Gratz, and Kroessler all immediately dismissed this idea as a huge fallacy. Avella, who has helped with the downzonings of many of the single-family home neighborhoods in his district, pointed out that many downzones are initiated in neighborhoods where the minority populations are the ones asking for the protection. It is not just white middle and upper middle class neighborhoods asking for downzonings – it is everyone. He noted that planning and preservation should be one and the same. What people really want is the preservation of quality of life. Kroessler agreed, adding that much of New York City is suburban, and the quality of life in suburban neighborhoods should be protected.

Presented with Garvin's narrow view of what the realm of preservation should be, the conference panelists and the audience got a glimpse of challenges preservationists will face in the years ahead – convincing the politicians and city planners who make land use policies, the real estate community that finances and lobbies for land use policy changes, and the public at large that preservation is no longer just about saving where George Washington slept or about the elite preserving the architectural gems of the Gilded Age. Historic preservation today means creating livable, viable, and economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods that are sustainable in the twenty-first century.

Summary Conclusion

The last panel was indicative of the challenges that preservationists are facing today. Although the conference illustrated that preservationists have long been part of the sustainable design and environmental movements, even if they were not fully aware of it, it is going to be a huge lift to convince other design and planning professionals, the environmental movement, the government, and the general public that preservationists' work in preserving historic resources and materials also helps advance the cause of sustainability. The idea that preservationists are NYMBYists, elitists, and purveyors of gentrification is deeply seated in the minds of many, but if preservationists make themselves an integral part of the sustainable design and community-based planning movements, the important work that they do will be more appreciated and more relevant to the people preservationists need to reach most.

For more information on the 2007 Preservation Conference, click here.

To RSVP for the 2008 Preservation Conference, Preservation 2030, click here.