



## CONNECTICUT PRESERVATION ACTION

*The preservation community's unified voice at the State Capitol since 1980*

February 19, 2016

In regards to the Committee of Planning and Redevelopment Bill No. 90: An Act Regarding Responsible Development, *Connecticut Preservation Action* would like to advocate that the committee seriously consider the inclusion of historic preservation in any state development plan regarding responsible development. Without proper attention to the protection and development of its historic resources, the state is in danger of losing local connections as well as valuable, sustainable, and proven development opportunities.

Connecticut cannot truly be environmentally responsible with only new construction. It must invest in its existing infrastructure. It is a myth that historic buildings are not energy efficient. As the National Trust for Historic Preservation has been arguing for over a decade, "The Greenest Building is the One Already Built." Existing buildings carry embodied energy, avoiding the gasoline and greenhouse emissions of bringing in equipment and materials for new construction. Building rehabilitation usually uses local materials and labor. Building reuse "almost always offers greater environmental savings than demolition and new construction." According to a 2011 study, "it takes between 10 to 80 years for a new energy efficient building to overcome, through efficient operations, the climate change impacts created by its construction. The study finds that the majority of building types in different climates will take between 20-30 years to compensate for the initial carbon impacts from construction." Preserving and reusing existing buildings makes better use of tax dollars by reducing the need for new roads, sewers, and utilities. Avoiding demolition reduces landfill waste. Demolition policies need to address this issue.<sup>1</sup>

Historic preservation is an important part of "smart," or sustainable, growth, as well as a tool for reducing the impact of climate change. It is no coincidence that the State Historic Preservation Office is located within Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. Even more critical to long-term planning, historic preservation supports the values in New Urbanism: ethnically and architecturally diverse, mixed-use, mixed-income, high density, and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods along corridors of mass transit. New Urbanism arose as a progressive planning strategy to save urban spaces in response to failed urban renewal projects in places such as New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and New Britain. Historic properties designations help to preserve traditional development patterns such as dense business districts, walkable neighborhoods, distinct villages, and rural farms. Historic buildings and neighborhoods provide well-built and human-scaled environments that are attractive places to live, work, or visit. The community's distinct architectural heritage creates a rich spatial context and may encourage the use of compatible materials and forms in new construction. Preserving historic resources provides a promise of stability, a stronger

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<sup>1</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Green Lab, "The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse," 2011, VI. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Green Lab and New Building Institute, "Realizing the Energy Efficiency potential of Small Buildings," June 2013.

neighborhood identity, and protects the community from radical change. Property values within designated districts tend to remain more stable through periods of economic volatility and show stronger appreciation over the long term.<sup>2</sup>

Historic designation on the National or State Register of Historic Places opens the door for funding, including grants and tax credits. When possible, and in tandem with community engagement, affordable housing, and strategic zoning regulations that include flexibility in issuing variances for recognized properties, historic preservation should be a tool in developing both a sense of place as well as an economic driver for the revitalization of many urban villages and neighborhoods. Working with municipalities, residents and developers, the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation assists with community planning and provides technical advice through various programs, including Making Places and Vibrant Communities Initiative. Other organizations, such as the Connecticut Main Street Center can provide guidance for attracting developers interested in investing in the revitalization of historic villages.<sup>3</sup>

Many of these grants come through the fund known as the Community Investment Act (CIA). The fees collected on real estate transactions are distributed in support of historic preservation, protecting open spaces, preserving farmland, and creating affordable housing. Between April 2014 and January 2015, the Community Investment Act funded \$3,959,165.00 for historic preservation.

In conclusion, preservation planning means not just preserving. Historic preservation is a proven tool that uses existing, character-defining, historically significant resources for environmentally responsible development.

Respectfully,



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President, Connecticut Preservation Action

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<sup>2</sup> PlaceEconomics, "Investment in Connecticut: The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation," State Historic Preservation Office, State of Connecticut (2011). See [http://www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/lib/cct/Economic\\_Impact\\_Study\\_%28Final\\_6-2011%29.pdf](http://www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/lib/cct/Economic_Impact_Study_%28Final_6-2011%29.pdf); Thomason and Associates and the Walker Collaborative, "Investment in Connecticut: State Historic Preservation Plan, 2011-2016," Prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, 2011. See [http://www.ct.gov/cct/lib/cct/state\\_historic\\_preservation\\_plan\\_ic.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/cct/lib/cct/state_historic_preservation_plan_ic.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut Main Street Center, "Come Home to Downtown," <http://ctmainstreet.org/programs-initiatives/come-home-to-downtown/> (accessed May 27, 2015).