

## **HOW HISTORIC PRESERVATION BENEFITS SAN FRANCISCO**

**Preservation builds community:** The local preservation movement emerged in the wake of the redevelopment frenzy of the 1950s and 1960s, when entire neighborhoods such as the Western Addition were being leveled in the name of “urban renewal.” Historic designation is invariably the result of successful community engagement and consensus building, with residents empowering themselves to have a say in their neighborhood’s growth. There is little chance of establishing an historic district (or individual landmark) without united and organized community support.

**Preservation protects property values:** Historic districts give residents two rare and economically valuable assurances: that the very qualities that attracted them to their neighborhood will endure over time, and that they can safely improve their home or business without fear that their neighbor will undermine this investment with completely out of scale or inappropriate development. Study after study across the country consistently finds higher appreciation rates in historic districts than in neighborhoods lacking that distinction, with price stability translating into longer owner tenure and enhanced neighborhood stability.

**Preservation protections have allowed San Francisco to grow without sacrificing its distinct character:** Heralded nationally as a model planning effort, the City’s 1985 Downtown Plan rated 1,000 buildings and created incentives for their protection. It mandated retention of 248 significant buildings and established six conservation districts to preserve the scale and character of significant groupings of historic structures. SPUR has observed: “The success of the downtown plan is illustrated by its influence on other cities and by the fact that San Francisco continues to have one of the best downtowns in the country.”<sup>1</sup>

**Preservation creates jobs:** Because rehabilitation projects are labor intensive, they create comparatively more jobs than new construction or manufacturing, with **60–70% of rehabilitation expenses going towards labor costs**. In new construction, roughly half of the expense goes towards materials. Dollar-for-dollar, rehabilitation projects create two to five times as many jobs as new construction. With the recent passage of the City’s Local Hiring for Construction ordinance, the role of historic preservation as a labor-intensive activity and a stimulus for local jobs is especially relevant today.

**Historic sites rank high among San Francisco visitor priorities:** In a new survey released this week by the San Francisco Travel Association, cultural travelers rank the City’s “historic buildings and architecture” as the number one attraction among its myriad cultural destinations. In the City’s multi-billion dollar tourism industry, historic resources such as the Golden Gate Bridge, the Ferry Building, Alcatraz, and Golden Gate Park are among the top ten most visited sites. Cultural travelers stay longer and spend more than other kinds of tourists, and therefore make a disproportionate contribution to local hotel and restaurant taxes.

**Historic resource surveys inform good planning:** The American Planning Association endorses historic resource surveys as an essential component to any preservation program.<sup>2</sup> By establishing historic significance (or lack thereof) at the front end of the review process, surveys provide greater predictability for property owners by helping to limit costly efforts to landmark properties targeted for demolition. Major cities across the country conduct historic surveys as a matter of course, with Los Angeles currently undertaking its own citywide survey encompassing over 800,000 parcels.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vision of a Place: A Guide to the San Francisco General Plan*. SPUR (2002), p.56.

<sup>2</sup> APA Policy Guide on Historic and Cultural Resources, [www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/historic.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/historic.htm).