



# The Past and Future City: How Historic Preservation is Reviving America's Communities

*Stephanie Meeks, Kevin C. Murphy*

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At its most basic, historic preservation is about keeping old places alive, in active use, and relevant to the needs of communities today. As cities across America experience a remarkable renaissance, and more and more young, diverse families choose to live, work, and play in historic neighborhoods, the promise and potential of using our older and historic buildings to revitalize our cities is stronger than ever.

This urban resurgence is a national phenomenon, boosting cities from Cleveland to Buffalo and Portland to Pittsburgh. Experts offer a range of theories on what is driving the return to the city—from the impact of the recent housing crisis to a desire to be socially engaged, live near work, and reduce automobile use. But there's also more to it. Time and again, when asked why they moved to the city, people talk about the desire to live somewhere distinctive, to be *some place* rather than *no place*. Often these distinguishing urban landmarks are exciting neighborhoods—Miami boasts its Art Deco district, New Orleans the French Quarter. Sometimes, as in the case of Baltimore's historic rowhouses, the most distinguishing feature is the urban fabric itself.

While many aspects of this urban resurgence are a cause for celebration, the changes have also brought to the forefront issues of access, affordable housing, inequality, sustainability, and how we should commemorate difficult history. This book speaks directly to all of these issues.

In *The Past and Future City*, Stephanie Meeks, the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, describes in detail, and with unique empirical research, the many ways that saving and restoring historic fabric can help a city create thriving neighborhoods, good jobs, and a vibrant economy. She explains the critical importance of preservation for all our communities, the ways the historic preservation field has evolved to embrace the challenges of the twenty-first century, and the innovative work being done in the preservation space now.

This book is for anyone who cares about cities, places, and saving America's diverse stories, in a way that will bring us together and help us better understand our past, present, and future.

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