

## POCANTICO PROCLAMATION on Sustainability and Historic Preservation

### Premise

The historic preservation community has a deep tradition of stewardship for our built environment, emerging as leaders in sustainable practices. Consistent with this tradition, historic preservation practitioners resolve to face head-on the global human-caused ecological crises that threaten our built and natural resources. Historic preservation must play a central role in efforts to make the built environment more sustainable. To this end, we urge all policy makers to recognize the following:

1. *The Climate Change Imperative* – Human activity has increased and accelerated global warming putting the environment at risk. It is imperative that we immediately and significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions to begin reversing extreme climate change patterns within a generation.
2. *The Economic Imperative* – Our current economy is based upon unsustainable consumption and an overreliance on finite resources. A new green economy must rest upon a conservation-based foundation to manage natural and cultural resources in a sustainable and economically beneficial manner.
3. *The Equity Imperative* – In recent years, economic inequalities between rich and poor have grown in the United States and abroad. The disproportionate levels of resource consumption and global pollution are unsustainable. Our consumption patterns must be altered to foster social equity, cultural diversity, and survival of all species.

### The Pocantico Principles on Sustainability and Historic Preservation

Therefore, in order to address the three above imperatives, we advocate the following:

1. **FOSTER** a Culture of Reuse

Maximizing the life cycle of all resources through conservation is a fundamental condition of sustainability. The most sustainable building, community or landscape is often the one that already exists. Lessons learned from historic preservation are transferable to the entire existing built and landscaped environment.

2. **REINVEST** at a Community Scale

It is not sufficient to address sustainability on a piecemeal basis through individual building projects. We must consider the larger context of the built environment: our communities. Reinvestment in existing, more sustainable neighborhoods – especially our older and historic ones – saves resources and promotes socially, culturally, and economically rich communities.

3. **VALUE** Heritage

The design of older buildings, landscapes, and communities should inform future building practices. While new green building technology offers promise for reducing the environmental harms caused by new construction, traditional building practices provide a wealth of sustainable design solutions that are premised on sensitivity to local conditions, careful siting and planning, and long-term durability, all of which provide essential models for the future.

4. **CAPITALIZE** on the Potential of the Green Economy

Preservation economics provide a powerful model for shifting away from a consumption-based and energy-inefficient economy. Reinvestment in our existing built environment must become an indispensable part of America's new green economy. Per dollar spent rehabilitation activities create more new jobs than new construction.

5. **REALIGN** Historic Preservation Policies with Sustainability

Today's challenges require that historic preservation move beyond maintaining or recovering a frozen view of the past. Historic preservation must contribute to the transformation of communities and the establishment of a sustainable, equitable, and verdant world by re-evaluating historic preservation practices and policies, and making changes where appropriate.

**Next Steps**

Consequently, we, the historic preservation community, recognize the environmental, economic, and social challenges that face us and call for policies that will result in revising our present course. We stand ready to offer an example for sustainability, while further challenging preservationists to more fully accommodate sustainable practices. We call for our leaders and fellow citizens to join us in taking immediate action.

*The Pocantico Proclamation on Sustainability and Historic Preservation was written by participants in the Pocantico Symposium: 'Sustainability and Historic Preservation -- Making Policy, November 5-7, 2008' based on materials developed at this symposium and the discussions that took place there. It reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.*