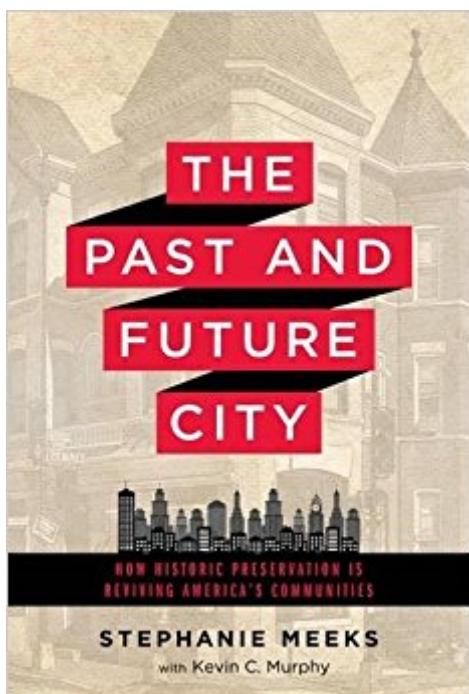


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The Past And Future City: How Historic Preservation Is Reviving America's Communities



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

"With passion, conviction, and clarity, this book underlines the importance of celebrating all of America's rich and diverse history and makes a compelling case for preservation as the key urban planning tool of the twenty-first century. In Birmingham, we've seen firsthand how historic buildings rejuvenate neighborhoods. Here, Stephanie Meeks takes the case nationwide." (William Bell, Mayor of Birmingham, Alabama)"Thoughtful and engaging, Meeks reveals how historic preservation is about more smart, managed change than simple conservation." (Booklist)"In The Past and Future City, Stephanie explains how preservation can enrich cities across America in a way that is both equitable and sustainable." (Mtamanika Youngblood, Executive Director, Historic District Development Corporation)"An impassioned and well-argued case for the economic, environmental, and social value of preservation and active reuse of the nation's historic buildings...the book is an articulate call to action." (Publishers Weekly)"The Past and Future City will offer a well-researched and clearly stated argument in favor of historic preservation as a key tool in the development of livable, prosperous cities." (Planetizen)"Nothing more convincingly shows the face of the new preservation movement than this visionary book. In these pages, the National Trust's president, Stephanie Meeks, shows a preservation movement dedicated to building economically vital, equitable, and sustainable cities using the raw materials of places that matter." (Max Page, Professor of Architecture and Director of Historic Preservation, University of Massachusetts Amherst)"Meeks wrote the book not just to advocate, although she is clear that the combination of preservation and adaptive reuse is not just the best way forward for our cities. It is in many ways the only way forward...The book's arguments are buttressed at every turn by quotations and detailed discussions of recent books and studies. Old-timers may profitably read it by scanning the endnotes, while newcomers and fence-sitters will enjoy the avalanche of stories Meeks provides." (Planning)"If you thought historic preservation was just about saving grand, classic structures from the wrecking ball, you would be wrong. According to The Past and Future City...the role of historic preservation is evolving, touching not just the

buildings that many consider some of the best parts of their cities, but the cities themselves." (Curbed)"The US suburb may be on the wane...so suggests Stephanie Meeks in this punchy study of the 'great inversion'; the flow of younger people into historic city centres." (Nature)"[Meeks] makes a comprehensive and forceful case that historic preservation, despite the way that many view it, is actually about function, newness, and vitality...Practical and often eye-opening, "The Past and Future City" is a guide to a tremendously important tool for making our cities better and more livable." (Civil Engineering)"An extraordinary and exceptional study that is especially commended to the attention of anyone who cares about cities, places, and saving America's diverse stories as a way to help us better understand our past, present, and future." (Midwest Book Review)"Stephanie Meeks explains how historic preservation is one of the most exciting aspects of revitalizing both large and small communities. Understanding, protecting, and enhancing our heritage makes these communities come alive. Ms. Meeks provides a guide to help enrich any community." (Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Co-Chair of the Congressional Historic Preservation Caucus)

A detailed look at the innovative ways historic preservation can create thriving communities. "

Historic preservation holds the seeds of renewal. By rehabilitating and restoring buildings that are already imbued with history, character, and a deep sense of place, a community can reinvigorate a flagging economy, create a hub of pedestrian activity, reduce overall energy expenditures, and retain local dollars which in turn creates more jobs, more activity, and more of a sense of ownership throughout the community. Stephanie Meeks drills down into the overwhelmingly positive economic impacts that historic preservation and building reuse can have in American cities. She explains the energy savings that come from reusing an older building rather than scraping it and rebuilding with newly harvested materials. She also cautions preservationists to guard against ignoring cultural sites of value that lie outside the usual focus of rich, powerful, white guys. She encourages communities to involve neighborhoods and property owners at the grassroots level. And she wades headlong into the debate about whether historic preservation leads to gentrification and a loss of affordable housing. This is a very well rounded book that looks at historic preservation from multiple angles. It's rich with data points, real-world examples from across the United States, and encouragements for how preservationists should move forward. I highly recommend it.

Stephanie Meeks does a good job articulating the arguments for preserving historic buildings within

our urban cores. Historic preservation is a critical component to growth within our cities and adaptive reuse of existing real estate is one of the most environmentally friendly endeavors to expand our housing stock. I applaud her book, though wish it focused more on the good economics related to the Historic Tax Credit.

This book belongs in every Historic Preservation Commissioner's library. It is a contemporary reference for viable urban living today and tomorrow.

This book has helped me look at my community differently. My first goal; walk every street in my neighborhood.

Limited insight...

The Past and Future City is a book that describes what historic preservation is rather than what others perceive the field to be. It looks behind the protection of buildings based on architectural beauty and focuses instead on communities. Meeks and Murphy both look to provide context for some of preservation's successes and struggles and they convincingly emphasize the importance of the movement to telling a broader narrative of history, while also going beyond the anecdotal to using data to show how a combination of older and smaller buildings are critical for keeping communities vibrant and strong. Perhaps one of the most important elements of the book are the chapters on displacement and affordability. Meeks and Murphy discuss the methods in which historic preservation can and should mitigate shifts in demographics in cities over time. A book worth reading for those within and outside the preservation movement.

Informative, timely read. I much prefer visiting places with a "history." And, this book makes a compelling case for the multiple benefits of preservation.

The Past and Future City not only offers a timely account of a path forward for the historic preservation movement as it celebrates the past 50 years of the National Historic Preservation Act, but also looks forward to new challenges and opportunities for preservationists to consider as the movement enters the next 50 years. The Past and Future City rebuts the perceived reputation as a "movement of no" by offering ways to encourage voluntary preservation of the built environment and cultural heritage, too, including the use of best traditional legal tools and new creative

incentives. It's exciting, at this pivotal juncture, to read this as a "call to arms" for a preservation movement that not only preserves nationally significant architecture, places, and landscapes, but also answers head-on the challenges preservation faces--real or perceived--including those related to social equity, sustainability, elitism, and inflexible nostalgia. Preservation leaders, academics, and students should consider it a "must read" for preservation and cultural heritage preservation in the 21st century.

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