



Status of Historic Preservation

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Introduction

PlaceEconomics and our companion firm, Heritage Strategies International, work at the intersection of historic resources and economics. To inform our own research, but also to provide insights to those working in the field of heritage conservation, we periodically conduct online surveys which we call PresPolls. These surveys are conducted using Survey Monkey, a link to which is provided through our direct email list and through social media.

May is Historic Preservation Month, so it seemed appropriate to have a PresPoll on the status of historic preservation in the United States. The link to the survey was shared via our three Facebook pages (PlaceEconomics, Heritage Strategies International, and Donovan Rypkema) as well as on the “Historic Preservation Professionals” Facebook page, a private group with approximately 5,400 members. Additionally, we sent a link to the survey to our domestic and international mailing lists of more than 6,000.

The survey was open from May 24 through May 27, 2022. Three hundred and nine responses were received. It is important to understand this is not a random survey of the general population. The vast majority of both our Facebook friends and our mailing lists have at least an interest in and are often vocal advocates for historic preservation and many are professionally involved in the fields of historic preservation and heritage conservation. In fact, more than 70% of the respondents to this survey reported that historic preservation was a major or minor part of their job. As a result, these findings offer a snapshot of the perspectives of preservationists towards the current status of historic preservation.

Two other aspects of this PresPoll should be noted. First, five of the ten questions asked about the respondents themselves, including their age, region, role in historic preservation, etc. It was anticipated that there might be some divergence regarding the current status of preservation depending on the perspective of the respondent, and that very much proved to be the case. Second, most of the substantive questions included an “Other, please specify” answer alternative. Many of the respondents chose to provide answers beyond the choices given. All of these responses received are included verbatim. They provide a very valuable qualitative supplement to the quantitative charts and graphs and are certainly worth reading.

Key Findings

Based on the responses of 309 survey participants, here are the ten most significant findings:

1. The most frequently heard argument against historic preservation is “Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive,” a response reported by more than half (56.8%) of all respondents. (See question 9)
2. The most frequently cited “preservation win” was “A major historic building was rehabilitated” named by almost half (48.2%) of survey takers. (See Question 6)
3. At the same time more than 6 in 10 (60.9%) said that “An important historic building was demolished” in their community. (See Question 7)
4. Preservationists don’t seem to be doing well on the political front. While 13.6% reported that “Pro-preservation candidates were elected to state or local office” more than twice that number (29.8%) said that “Anti-preservation candidates were elected to local or state office.” (See Questions 6 and 7)
5. Preservationists probably also need to do better on the public relations front as a third (32.3%) said that “Anti-preservation editorials were printed in the local newspaper.” (See Question 7)
6. The biggest perceived barrier to historic preservation, noted by more than 1 in 4 (26.4%) was “Lack of understanding of the benefits of preservation.” (See Question 8)
7. The basic tool to protect historic resources is still being used, as one in seven (14.7%) respondents said that “A new local historic district was created.” (See Question 6)
8. But nearly the same share (12.9%) said “Properties were removed from local historic designation.” (See Question 7)
9. On the positive side, more than a third of survey takers (35.3%) said that “A place of significance to underrepresented groups was designated.” (See Question 6)
10. When asked if historic preservation was better or worse than a year ago the responses were nearly equally divided with around a quarter (26.5%) saying things were better, another quarter (22.9%) saying things were worse, and half (50.7%) saying things were about the same. (See Question 10)
11. There were significant differences among respondents, however, with Millennials, people working in the public sector, and in most regions seeing things as better than a year ago, while Baby Boomers, preservation advocates not working in the field, and respondents from the South and Pacific Regions perceive things as worse.

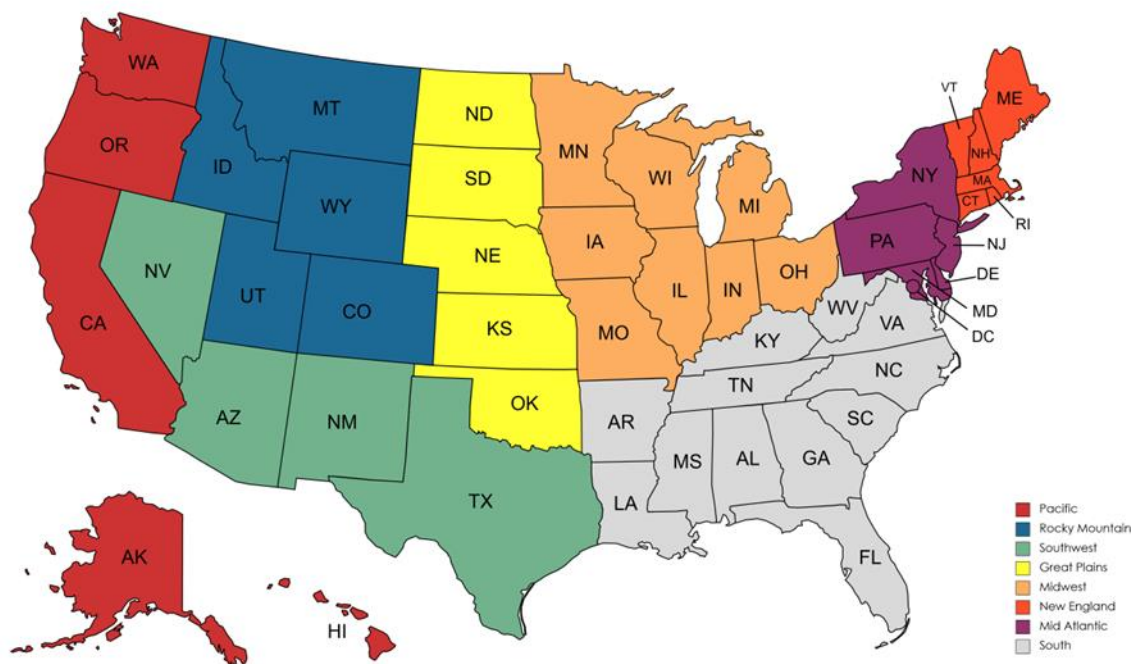
Open ended responses also often gave a nuanced sense of preservation not revealed in the multiple-choice options. Among many excellent volunteered comments were these:

- Started a new, much-overdue preservation planning process with equity at the center
- An important early Black architect's contributions to our city were recognized and celebrated.
- On the cusp of establishing new legacy business funding/marketing program
- Massive Development - loss of historic resources
- Workers cottages made up over 40% of demolitions in my Chicago neighborhood.
- Elected officials pressuring historic boards to ignore the law
- In my county, rabid property rights politics have weakened any preservation efforts.

- Consistent misconception of what preservation means
- Preservation ordinance and board created
- Help is needed here

Question 1 – In what US Region to you live?

Responses were received from every region in the country with the Midwest and the South together providing just over 40% (42.4%) of all responses.



Pacific	Rocky Mountain	Southwest	Great Plains	Midwest	South	Mid-Atlantic	New England
15.2%	3.9%	8.1%	3.6%	21.7%	20.7%	16..5%	8.1%

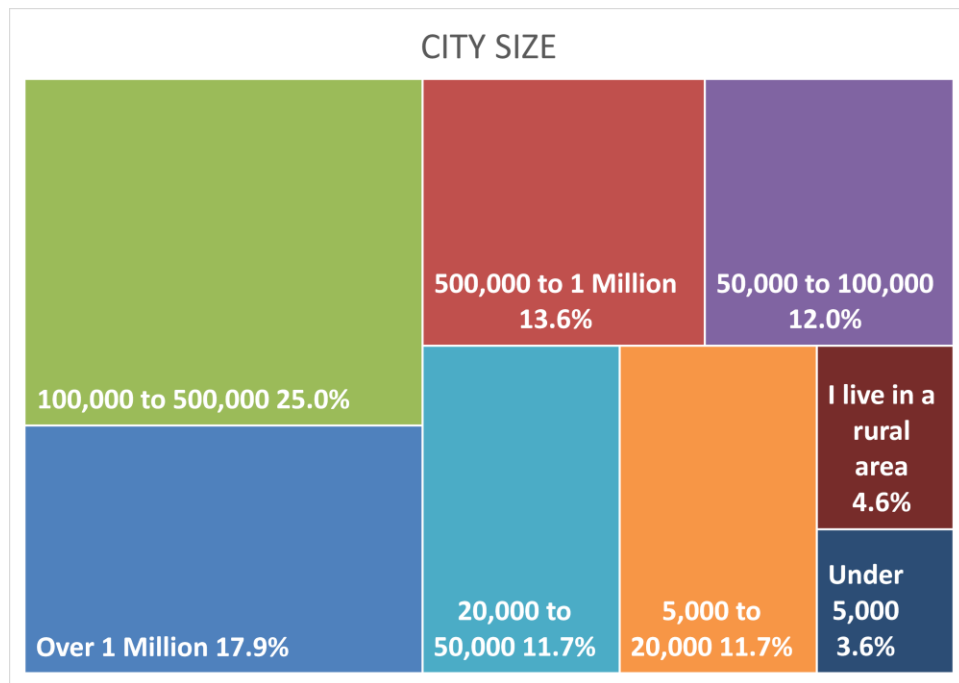
Only 1.6% of respondents said they don't live in the United States. Point seven percent indicated "Other," with their responses being:

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Northern Virginia considers itself to be mid-Atlantic

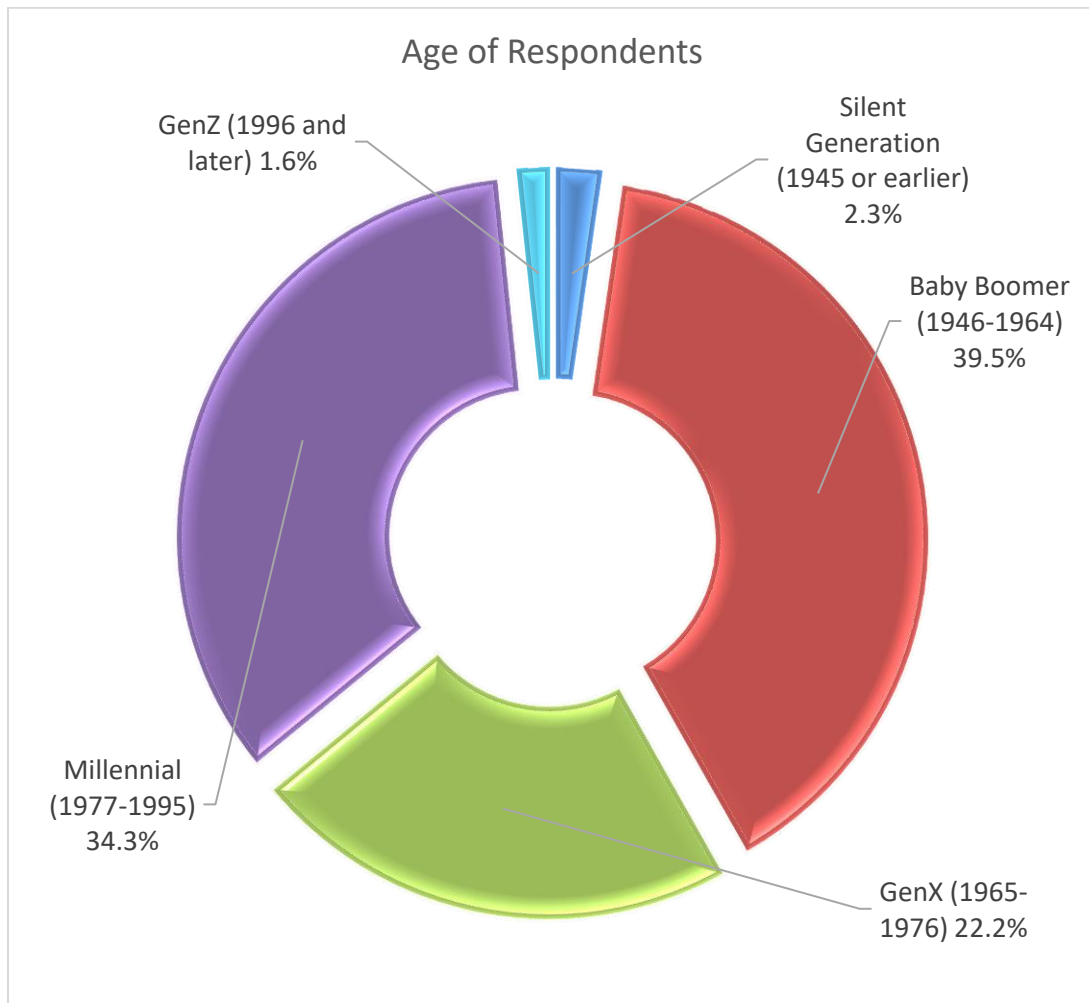
Question 2 –What is the size of the city in which you live?

Survey respondents came from every size of community: a quarter live in cities with populations between 100,000 and 500,000; another 18% were from cities with populations of more than 1 million; and 8.2% live in rural areas or towns with populations under 5,000.



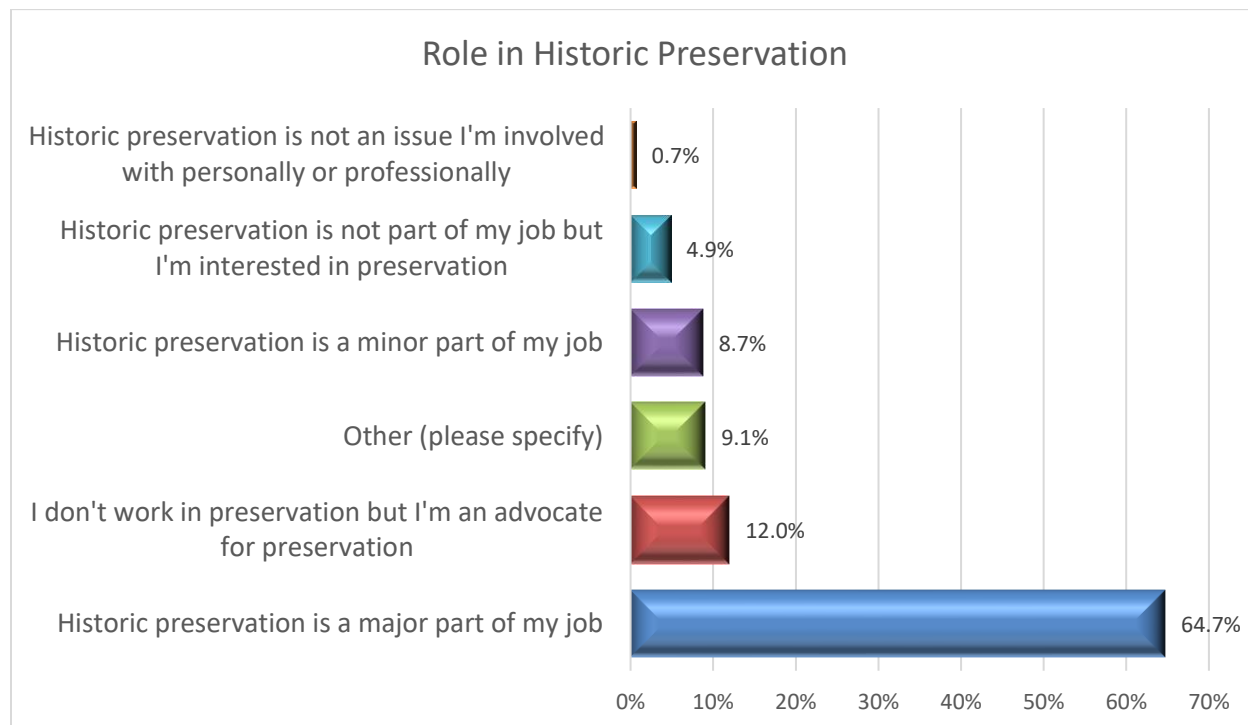
Question 3 – In which generation were you born?

Preservationists come in all ages as did the respondents to this PresPoll. The largest age group was Baby Boomers at 39.5%, followed by Millennials at 34.3% and GenXers at 22.2%.



Question 4 – What is your role in historic Preservation?

Nearly two thirds (64.7%) of PresPoll respondents reported that historic preservation was a major part of their job. The second largest group (12%) was advocates who do not work in preservation.



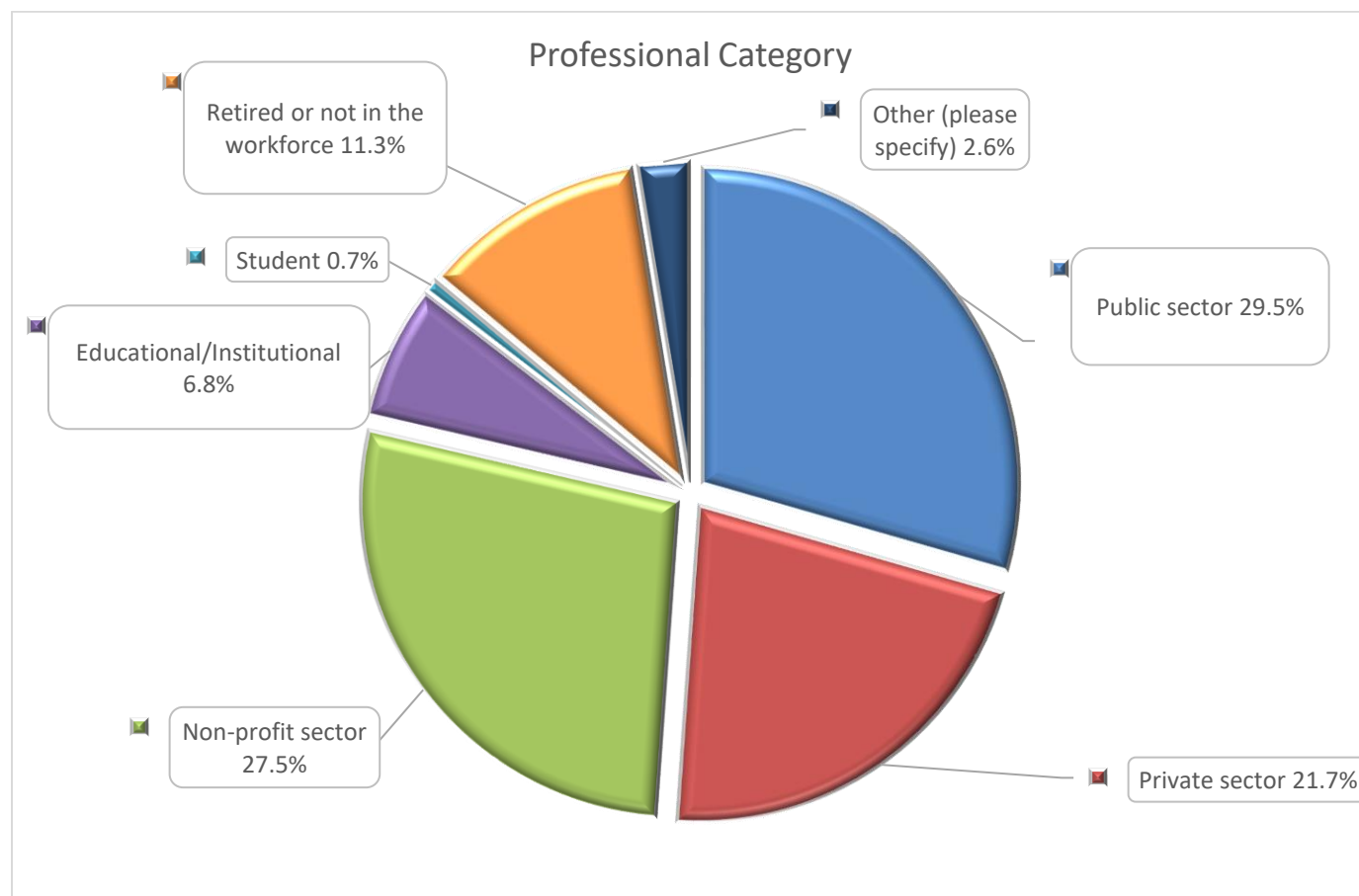
Other responses:

- Retired environmental planner/architectural historian
- Preservation educator
- Retired historic preservation professional but very active as a volunteer
- Serve on Historical Preservation Commission
- MFA Preservation Design student at SCAD
- Board member of AHC, tour docent
- I am on a County Historic Preservation Commission
- Historic Preservation was the major part of my job.
- I am not employed, but sit on a non-profit board and preserving two historic buildings
- I don't work in preservation but am undertaking preservation efforts with my own home.
- Our nonprofit is ALL about Historic Preservation, Education and Community Participation
- I'm a volunteer in historic preservation.
- On the board of PRESERVING THE WILDWOODS: A Community Alliance
- Chair, Historical Commission (volunteer position)
- Historic Resources Commission Member City-County
- HPC Commissioner

- Co-founder of Chicago Workers Cottage Initiative
- Formerly worked in historic preservation.
- On the board of land preservation
- Retired but was a Main Street professional who practiced historic preservation economic development. I will always be a historic preservation advocate.
- Preservation Planner retired
- I am a preservation professional whose current job involves minimal preservation work. Appointed to local landmarks board 12 yrs. About to retire & reopen my preservation consulting firm.
- Live in a historic preservation district
- In school for historic preservation
- Former historic preservation professional for 25 years. Now am a community volunteer and seem to get myself involved in major preservation projects as an advocate and consultant.
- Historic Preservation Board Member
- Ex director all volunteer Preservation Society
- I have an MA in HP, was very active when I lived in New York City

Question 5 – Which best describes your professional category?

Survey respondents represented a good balance of sectors, including 29.5% from the public sector, 21.7% from the private sector, and 27.5% from the non-profit sector.

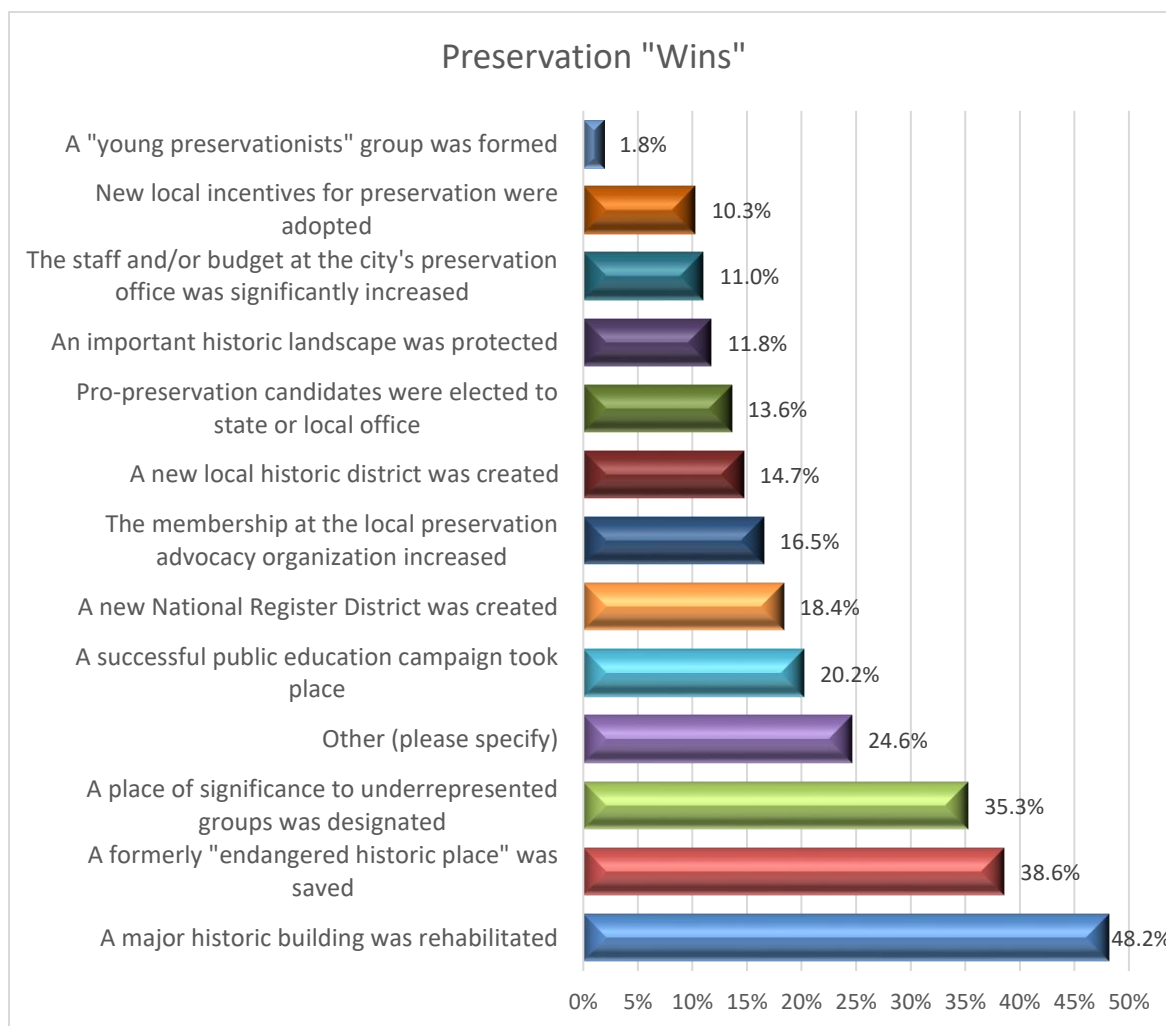


Other responses:

- Semi-retired - building library databases
- Consultant to all sectors
- Both public and non-profit sectors.
- Architect, I work with the first four on your list.
- Both public and private sectors
- Freelance
- Unemployed
- Live in a historic district and on the board oh the historical society.

Question 6 – Which of these "preservation wins" happened in your community over the last year? (check all that apply)

The good news is that nearly half (48.2%) of respondents reported that a major historic building was rehabilitated in their community and an additional 38.6% said that a formerly “endangered historic place” was saved. More than a third (35.3%) noted that a place of significance to underrepresented groups was designated. Only 1 in 10 (10.3%) said that new preservation incentives had been adopted over the last year while 14.7% saw a new local historic district created.



Other responses:

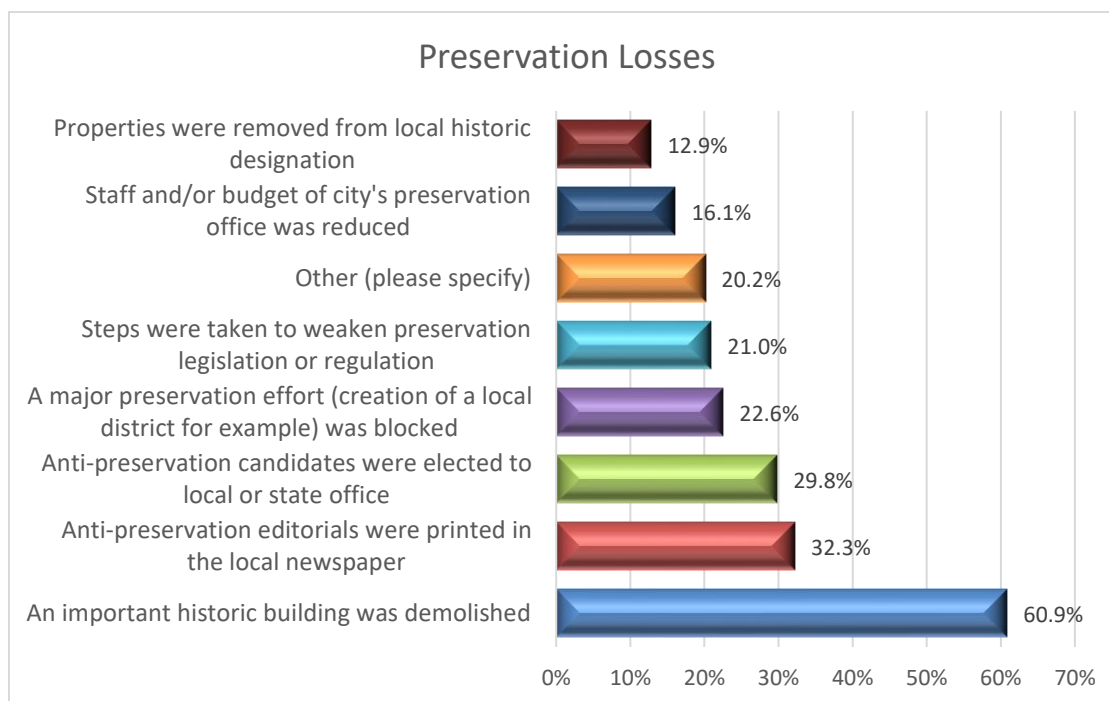
- Updated Preservation Guidelines
- New individual landmarks were listed
- Preservation walking tours created
- Nothing of note happened.
- Unrestrained disposable sprawl and historic loss is the norm
- A building on the National Register was saved from ruination.

- None of these happened
- A one-block historic overlay trial began. A residential tax incentive was adopted to begin in the 2023 budget.
- Non-profit preservation organization survived COVID budget challenges and continues to operate
- A pro-development planning director and Review Board Chair left the city. Thankfully.
- city's regulatory code for preservation was updated/changed significantly
- Started a new, much-overdue preservation planning process with equity at the center
- That rehab is underway, but otherwise, very little of real note is happening in our area.
- NYC ----- LOTS of ALL the above!
- State Tax Credits for owner occupied buildings program reinstated
- We are making progress toward increasing the maximum local penalty (i.e. better deterrence) for unpermitted demolition
- importance of underrepresented groups of a historic place was acknowledged
- In 2018, a successful referendum to save a significant city owned building and landscape generated a lively debate on historic preservation, equity, sustainability, etc.... Over 27,000 people voted for preserving this local landmark. Last year a nonprofit organization successfully secured a lease to operate in the building and has started rehabilitation work. One new council member was elected who was closely involved in the effort to save this building and landscape.
- Our National Register Historic District was updated
- An important early black architect's contributions to our city were recognized and celebrated.
- Slight shift of local historic landmarks commission toward enforcement of code violations and adherence to criteria.
- Historic windows saved on a large downtown building.
- A historic committee was formed (governmental)
- Preservation plan drafted
- None of the above
- Preservation ordinance and board created
- NOTHING
- Creation of a local preservation organization in Phoenix. Plus your report! 😊
- We created a Historic Wildwood Houses coloring book and created Historic Panels to be hung in vacant storefront buildings.
- Historic tax credit program at the state level was increased, increased awareness was drawn to historic sites belonging to underrepresented communities by the local historic preservation organization.
- Major historic resources survey and context developed for downtown
- Reinstated inactive CLGs
- "A historic building(s) were rehabilitated.
- Local Main Street Program gained some local funding support.
- A CDBG grant is being utilized to leverage properties in a historic district.
- State HTC will sunset at the end of the year."
- <https://evanstonroundtable.com/2022/05/15/heritage-sites-program-unveils-inaugural-markers-on-darrow-avenue/>

- An historic preservation ordinance was passed after several attempts and we became a CLG.
- I don't work on preservation per se in the small rural community where I live. I work on projects around the state and around the country, mostly in preservation planning and consultation
- help is needed here
- The funds were raised to rehabilitate a historic building and construction is about to start.
- An historic building was added to the National Register of Historic Places
- None
- Working toward listing a local landmark on the national register.
- Honestly nothing.
- Historic Preservation Plans were updated.
- A Preservation Plan was completed
- State historic tax credit program sunset was extended another 5 years.
- Increasing the number of interior easements
- I worked on the preservation of a significant local historic resource
- We are working on saving a historic square block of downtown from Greed
- Currently work on petition to preserve downtown
- A capital campaign for a major historic building is underway
- Design guidelines were adopted
- Nothing
- Sadly, none of the above took place in our community.
- On the cusp of establishing new legacy business funding/marketing program
- An architectural survey of the downtown district was conducted.
- It's sad, but I cannot check any of the above boxes. My community is at a stale stand still.
- Historic building listed on National Register.
- We are currently under review for a new local historic district, College Park
- We didn't lose any designated properties
- None that I'm aware of
- State legislature adopted a law which requires local appraisal districts to consider reducing taxable value of properties in local or National Register historic districts
- Nothing. We live in challenging times. Preservation is seen as government interference or overreach.
- Nothing happened in my small, rural community in Idaho, but all those checked boxes above happened in Spokane, where I work.
- Unknown
- places of importance from the 20th Century were designated (a big deal here!)
- Nothing at all! No preservation movement or awareness in my community.
- Historic context for African Americans being developed with city funding; historic preservation economic impact study grant awarded; state tax credit was significantly enhanced, which will have a local impact; Comp Plan development is engaging with preservationists; design guidelines are being improved

Question 7 – Which of these "preservation losses" happened in your community?

Historic buildings continue to be lost with more than 60% (60.9%) reporting the demolition of an important historic building. In many cases preservation is facing headwinds from City Hall or the State legislature as 29.8% of respondents noted that anti-preservation candidates were elected, 22.6% reported a major preservation effort was blocked, and 16.1% that funding for their city's preservation office was reduced.



Other responses:

- Status quo
- Preservation efforts all too often are rightly associated with anti-social, elitist and anti-development efforts that only benefit old people trying desperately to keep thing sub-urban and shitty.
- SHPO is small minded with lack of preservation leadership
- numerous unprotected buildings in unrecognized historic districts were demolished; significant up-zoning of many historic areas; municipal heritage staff diverted from preservation to media functions
- Preservation zoning codes were ignored.
- Support is strong for preservation
- Mayor/city council are anti-preservation
- Past preservation blocks have worn down the local interest in and concern for preservation on any wide scale.
- Ditto { supra }
- My city has been losing historic buildings to "demolition by neglect" for

the past few decades. No preservation of any kind is done here, the city just covers windows with cheap OSB.

- Still a lot of top-down decision making
- One longtime council member was re-elected. While this council member was a strong supporter of preservation (especially for the significant local landmark threatened with demolition), lately they have voted against local landmark designations. Several landmark-worthy buildings (some which include cherished longtime small businesses) are threatened with demolition.
- A new code was adopted and they tried to remove Design Guidelines. They were successfully saved.
- Preservation continues to struggle to establish its presence among arts and culture groups and in the region's non-profit community. We are the only triangle, so to speak, among well-established groups of circles and rectangles.
- Gradual undermining of local historic properties ordinance by lowering standards without updating actual development code criteria. Example: Approving whole-house replacement of salvageable historic windows with vinyl-composite products.
- New infill project built and others being discussed that ignore the local guidelines and scale of historic downtown
- Consistent misconception of what preservation means
- no ability to stop the demolition of a building in a National Register district
- Fire severely damaged a historically significant house quite recently, loss of several historic buildings in a national register-listed historic district due to

fires, and improper alteration/renovation of historic buildings in the past year.

- Loss of historic buildings due to natural disaster
- Massive Development - loss of historic resources
- A Historic Building was condemned and is slated for demolition
- General apathy towards historic preservation. Also community feels that it is not their history that is being saved.
- The nomination for the landmark designation of a former local church was not approved by City Council.
- downtown owners have continued to not accept a local historic designation of the downtown
- Our rural area is more threatened by polarized, uninformed/misinformed political beliefs and a lack of cultural awareness necessary for preservation discourses.
- NR eligible bridge is slated for DOT demolition
- Local preservation organizations and city staff apathy and focus on wealthy white resources
- Enforcement issue with a property owner who did exterior work on a historic building that removed historic elements and without a permit.
- Things seem to have remained the same.
- None
- incompatible renovation or new construction within historic district
- Workers cottages made up over 40% of demolitions in my Chicago neighborhood.
- Effort to increase state historic tax credit cap was not successful.

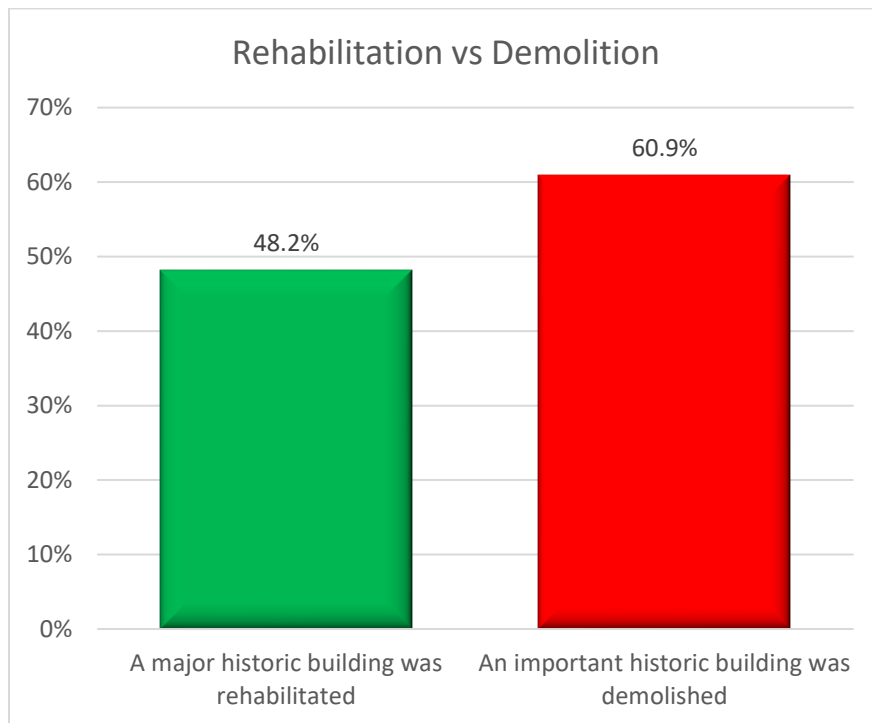
- Major turnover continually happening at the city preservation office
- City council is ignoring public opposition
- A university continued tearing down buildings contributing to a national landmark district in order to build two dormitories.
- The city worked for years to set up a way to get ownership of abandoned buildings and market them for reuse. After the success of 6 properties the current city council feels the program is moving too slowly and wants to demolish two city blocks of the most prominent historic properties in town
- None
- Based on the first meeting of the Planning commission our nomination of the College Park National historic district may not make it onto the local based on politics rather than stated goals and policies.
- Whole block of a residential historic district was demolished to construct 5 story homeless structures
- None that I'm aware of
- The state legislature, including almost every single member of both political

parties, voted to make it more difficult to establish local historic districts. Property owners can now "opt out" of local historic districts under consideration if they object to the designation. Super majorities of local city councils are required to keep objectors in the districts. This is a very difficult bar for many cities to cross and spells a vast reduction in the number of (or the end of) designations of local historic districts in this state.

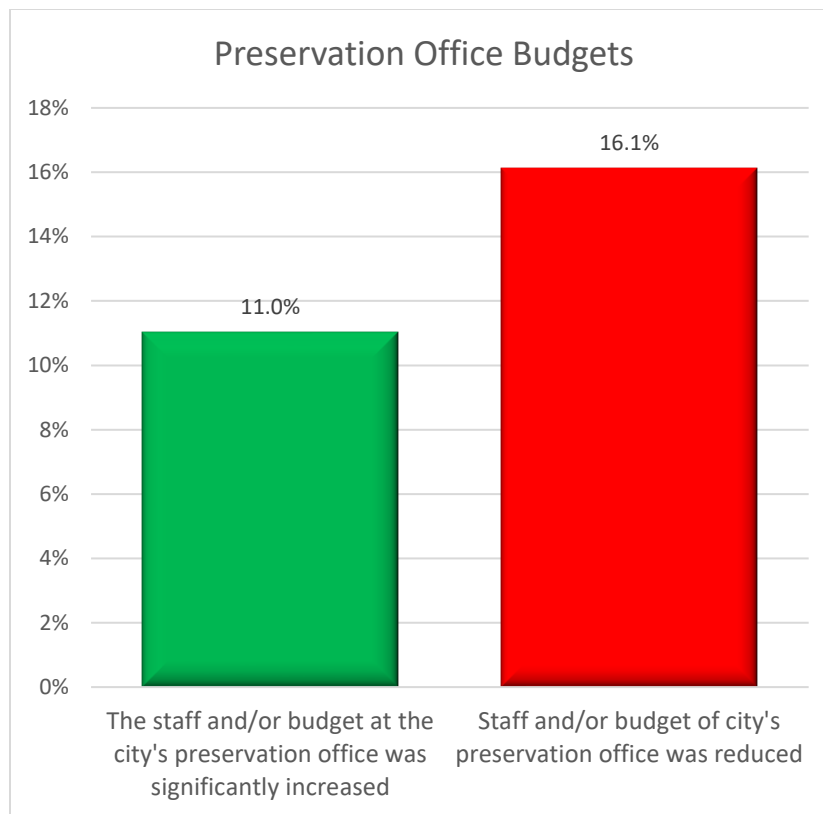
- The historic, WPA built school in my community was demolished and in my county, rabid property rights politics have weakened any preservation efforts.
- the State took to court the power of local preservation laws, saying they do not apply to State buildings (outcome pending)
- General animosity towards preservation.
- A group of demolitions in a historic district
- City approved the demolition of an entire block in a designated preservation district.

Some Good News/Bad New Comparisons

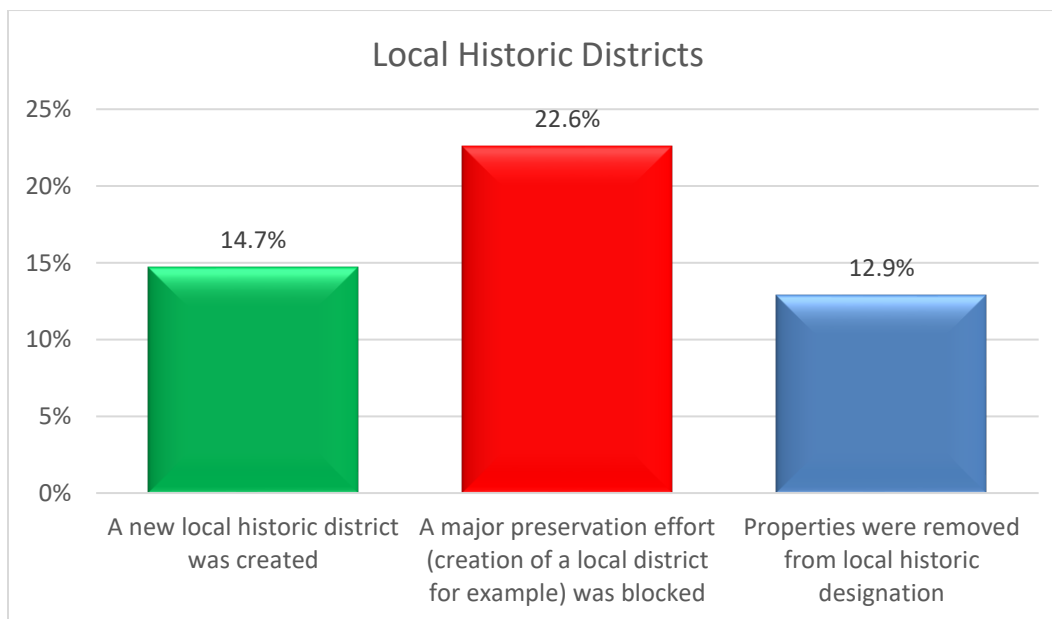
There were four questions in the survey that allowed a “good news/bad news” direct comparison. While almost half (48.2%) reported the rehabilitation of a major historic building, 60.9% said that such a building was demolished.



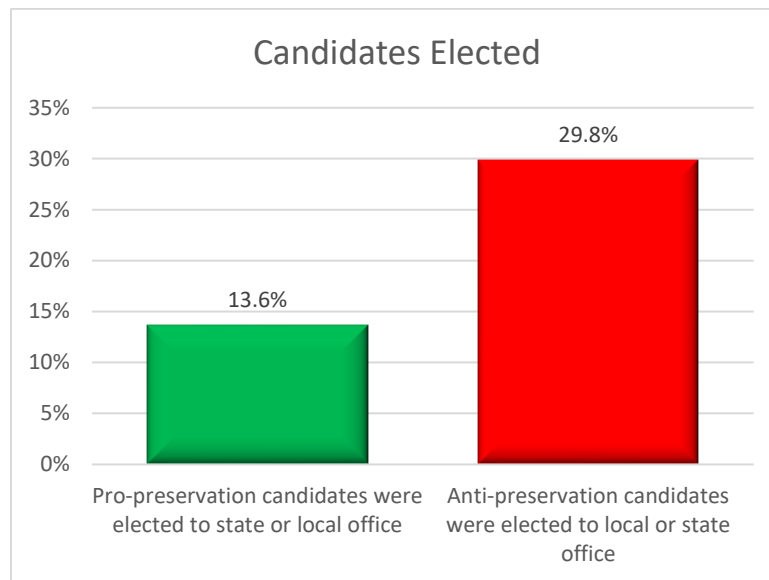
Effective local historic preservation needs effective local historic preservation offices. While 11% of respondents reported a significant increase in the staff and/or budget of the city’s historic preservation office, 16.1% said that office’s budget was reduced.



Local historic districts are the primary means in the United States to protect historic resources. About 15% (14.7%) of reporting communities said that a new local district was created in the last year, almost a quarter (22.6%) said that “A major preservation effort (creation of a local district for example) was blocked” and 12.9% said “Properties were removed from local historic designation.”



Ultimately effective tools for historic preservation – regulatory protection, incentives, policies, and strategies – require the adoption of ordinances at the local level and statutes at the State level. While 13.6% of respondents said that pro-preservation candidates had been elected, more than twice as many (29.8%) said that anti-preservation candidates had taken office at the state or local level.



Question 8 – What do you think is the largest barrier to historic preservation in your community

What is keeping historic preservation from happening? Topping the list (26.4%) is a lack of understanding of the benefits of preservation followed by concerns over property rights (16.5%).



Other responses:

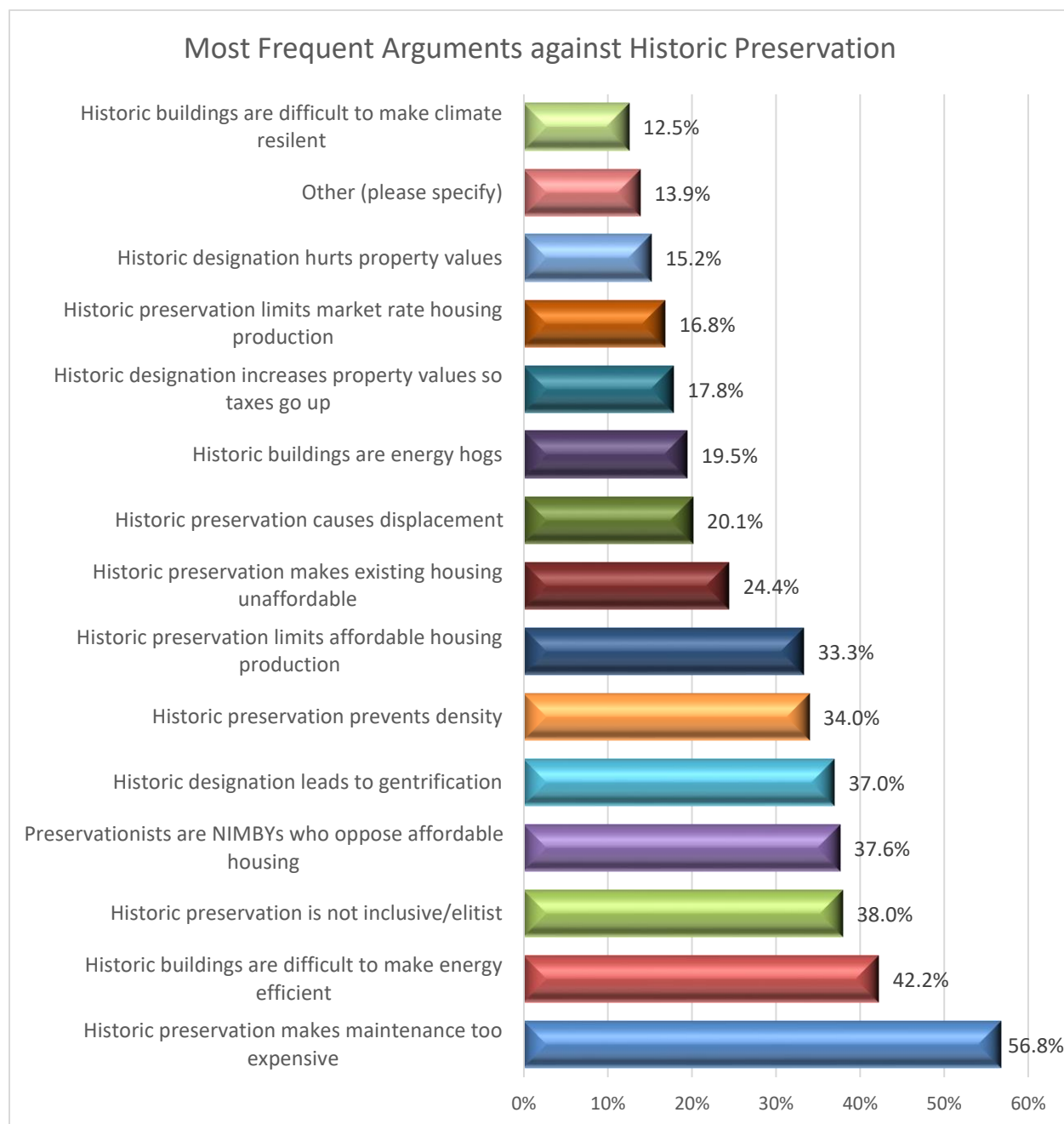
- Preservation is seen as a barrier to density, affordable housing, socioeconomic diversity, and the Old Guard is just making it worse by refusing to find a middle ground.
- lack of understanding of the benefits of preservation AND apathy
- Housing shortages.
- SHPO staff
- Need for more housing/affordable housing and hence increased density
- A state department of transportation committed to destroying historic resources.
- All of the above
- Big local push for increased density and affordable housing production/retention - Preservation is regarded by local leaders and a large segment of the vocal population as antithetical to those goals
- All of the above.
- Perception of over regulation
- Preservation is seen as anti-density and anti-affordability, a local view compounded by strong anti-preservation legislation at the state level

- Most of the above serve as local barriers.
- Landmarking churches with declining congregation numbers is problematic. (This is a challenge to community buy-in noted above.) When preservationists react to a threat when these places should have been landmarked years ago does little to build confidence for designation among elected officials. This is particularly true if the nomination originates with a non-owner. Related is that commissions are challenged in so many other ways that these situations only serve to further undermine local perceptions.
- Perception as elitist and racist
- funding in general
- Public institution's lack of financial resources. With financial resources strapped, funds must go to primary mission of institution, which is not preservation.
- all of the above
- Not enough city preservation staff
- why cant you select more than one?
- NIMBYism on the part of white, middle/upper class residents, using preservation as justification; and lack of diversity amongst preservation supporters / lack of relevance to communities of color
- Developers who don't give a crap. Lack of backbone by planning and economic development staff.
- interest in only some areas of the city
- Money needed for preservation projects.
- Mayor wants to increase rateables and is letting developers demolish everything in order to build condos
- Myth of preservation as barrier to affordable housing
- All of these are present and an issue in my community. Top is challenges related to community buy-in/skepticism
- Development pressures
- All of the above. Weak and uneducated local historic preservation commission and bad outdated codes and guidelines.
- So many! Lack of incentives, lack of understanding of the benefits of preservation, and the strong belief that preservation is racist and not equitable
- Most of the listed barriers exist here plus City planners determined to redevelop our historic areas thanks to the current planning trend to densify central areas, politicians not capable of thinking otherwise, and population pressures.
- All of the above. Equally.
- poor, short-sighted messaging by disorganized preservation folks combined with serious housing crisis and need to increase density means no one wins
- Property values - small homes w/in residential areas where incoming owners want larger 'improved' homes; generally building stock was/is small; sites are adequate and the need for or profit to be made from redeveloping a site is high esp for residential market
- Market forces; expensive real estate.
- People think historic preservation comes down to restrictions on their house, such as what color one can paint it.
- Elected officials pressuring historic boards to ignore the law
- Pace of development, weak zoning, and lack of creativity pushes owners to choose demolition of historic over rehabilitation
- Ease of demolition

- Lack of access of the property owner of contractors and architects for the project. They have the money and desire but do not know where to start.
- Everyone wants to make a buck & preservation of historic homes & districts comes in last!
- Developers and a city that only cares about helping them make money
- Local, county & state governments in our state do not see the value in preserving our historic sites (with the exception of 3 communities)
- Property values are extremely high...makes homes more threatened for demo.
- All of the above
- Need for inexpensive housing in a tight market. Larger buildings on consolidated lots as the preferred solution
- Real estate forces with escalating property values driving redevelopment, house flips, and lots of speculation
- Incredible development pressure and local elected officials being afraid denying it due to legal ramifications
- Money
- While all these apply, the biggest threat is rising housing demand/costs entices developers to rear down historic structures for more profitable housing types.
- Better question: What is the best approach to preservation?
Sustainability. People relate well to preserving structures when it is presented as a major part of sustainability.
- Cost of housing due to lack of inventory has resulted in developers supported by City Council and staff when targeting historic neighborhoods and districts for large developments.

Question 9 – Which of these arguments against historic preservation have you most frequently heard in the last year (select up to five)

Opponents of historic preservation use an entire range of arguments. Survey participants were asked to identify up to five that they had heard most frequently over the last year. More than half (56.8%) heard that “Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive.” More than a third of respondents reported hearing arguments dealing with energy efficiency, preservation as elitist, housing affordability (including preservationists as NIMBYs), gentrification, and density.

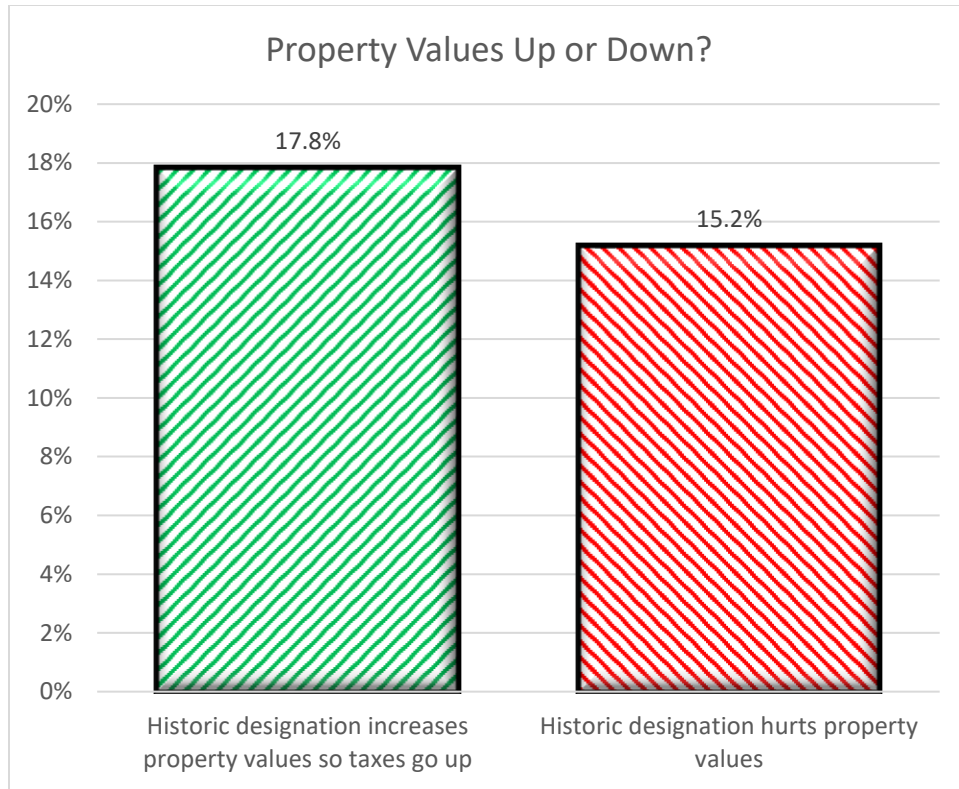


Other responses:

- preservation cannot withstand pressures of urban development because it doesn't make financial sense.
- It's expensive to support preservation.
- if you have a historic building "someone" will tell you what you can and cannot do with it.
- Old is not worthy.
- This is just an old building, it's not important
- It costs more
- People see historic preservation and repurposing as preventing progress. New = better
- design guidelines for rehabilitation & adaptive reuse are too restrictive.
- All
- Historic properties can't be saved because the floors don't align with the new construction. We lose more buildings to this than anything.
- All of the above.
- Closed-minded people without a real argument.
- I think the density argument has its drawbacks, particularly if you consider smaller residential buildings being replaced by significantly taller buildings on those same footprints even in historic districts. While I'm for compact historic residential neighborhoods, the truth is that residential density will increase only in certain circumstances, given shrinking household sizes and population changes.
- My building is not "Historic"
- the government will tell me what to do
- Historic preservation costs more and limits the "highest and best use" of a property and the property owner's freedom to seek that best use.
- Lack of qualified and available crafts people, lack of city staff time for code enforcement
- Preservationists are NIMBYs who are anti-development (NOT connected to affordable housing as developers are looking to make new McMansions, not affordable homes!)
- It is too expensive and difficult to seismically retrofit historic buildings.
- You'll note that we face claims that preservation both hurts property values and raises property taxes. Sometimes from the same people.
- May make selling later more difficult; advisory boards don't have any binding power; government owned buildings may not want to be land marked because the city won't be able to develop or sell later
- I don't want preservationists telling me what i can and can't do with my property.
- we didn't have authority to deny demolition of a building in a National Register district
- Everything. We are a tourist beach town and it is difficult for people who want to renovate/restore beach cottages/houses because of the CAFRA regulations plus the challenges of developers who buy up, demolish and build cookie cutter condos. Also, the people in power have misinformation about preservation and historic commissions and don't understand the value of preservation as a tourist attraction
- Cheaper to demolish and build new
- Seismic updates are too expensive with unreinforced masonry

- Don't see the value of "old" buildings
- No owner wants the "red tape" of being allowed to do something to their own building. Historic preservation = red tape
- Designating local historic districts is cost prohibitive for many mid to low income residents of historic districts
- I know it says select 5 but all of these reasons I have selected are very vocal in the Houston, TX community.
- To offset the cost of historic preservation, the project had to include some significant addition/alteration or necessitated the sale of / development of the remaining site for some other use/purpose contrary to historic preservation
- Our property owners are worried about losing the ability to make future improvement and the limitations that may come with the designation
- Cost to preserve historic building too high
- A preservation ordinance would create additional red tape for property redevelopment
- There is no argument because the developers don't have to make a case for what they are doing or why - they have the full support of the local government
- Historic designation makes redevelopment harder and economically infeasible
- It's cheaper to demolished and rebuild.
- Historic preservation limits what a developer can build
- Historic preservation restricts development (from only one councilor). This is despite over \$1 billion in preservation-based economic development and new construction in downtown historic district over last 44 years (and only 1 or 2 appeals of any decision over that time).
- Historic Preservation is a tool for government control over people's freedoms
- HP is a white supremacy activity (local elected official)
- Another layer of red tape, anti-growth
- Total lack of knowledge or awareness of preservation. Demolition of main street structures to make strip mall.

For decades, one of the most common arguments against historic preservation was that it hurt property values. Now the claim "Historic designation increases property values so taxes go up" (17.8%) is heard slightly more often than "Historic designation hurts property values" (15.2%). As one respondent wrote, "You'll note that we face claims that preservation both hurts property values and raises property taxes. Sometimes from the same people."

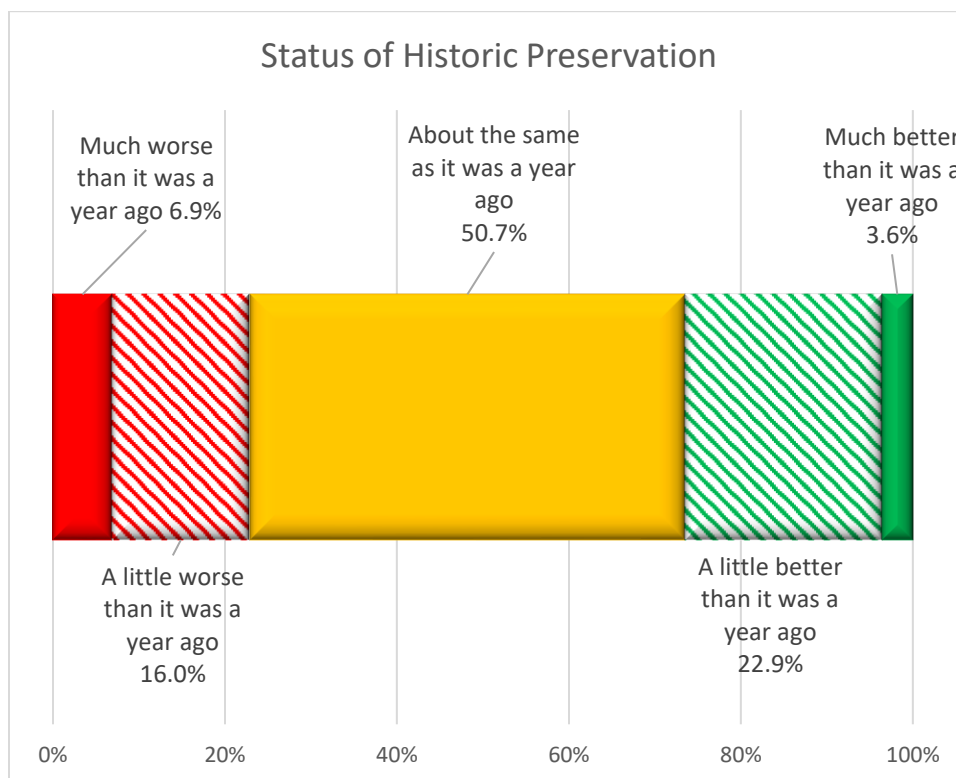


While “Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive” was the most frequently heard argument in most regions, there were some significant differences in the top five arguments depending on the region. The table on the following page shows the five most frequently heard arguments in each of the eight regions.

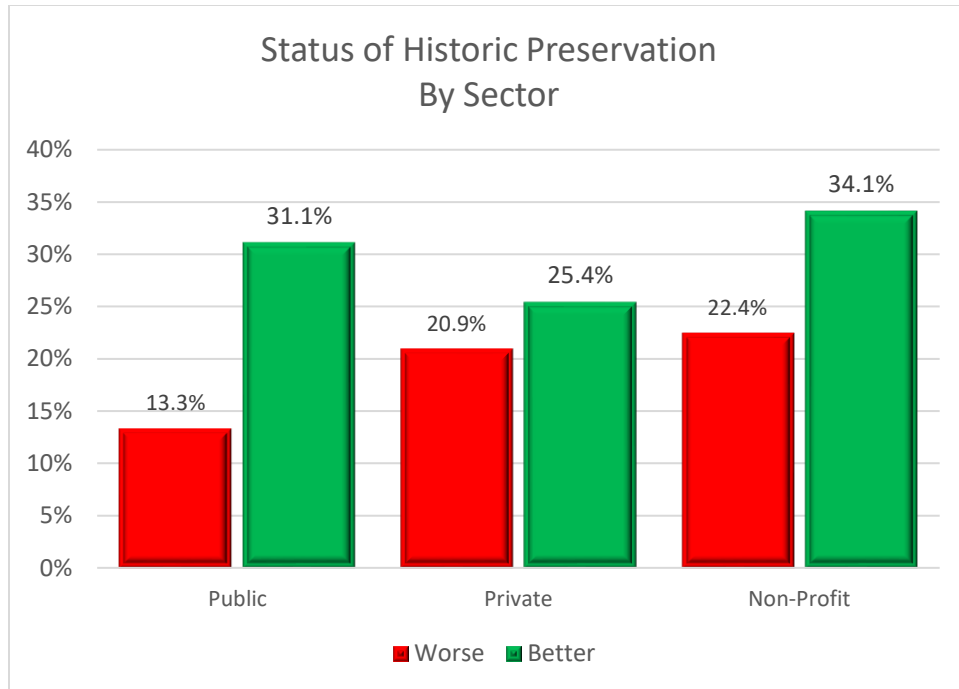
Region	Rank	Argument
New England	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	3 (t)	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	3 (t)	Preservationists are NIMBYs who oppose affordable housing
	5	Historic designation leads to gentrification
Mid-Atlantic	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2 (t)	Historic preservation prevents density
	2 (t)	Historic designation leads to gentrification
	4	Historic preservation limits affordable housing production
	5	Historic preservation makes existing housing unaffordable
South	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	3	Historic designation leads to gentrification
	4	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	5	Preservationists are NIMBYs who oppose affordable housing
Midwest	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	3	Historic designation leads to gentrification
	4	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	5	Preservationists are NIMBYs who oppose affordable housing
Great Plains	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	3 (t)	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	3 (t)	Historic buildings are energy hogs
	5	Historic preservation limits affordable housing production
Southwest	1	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	2 (t)	Historic preservation prevents density
	2 (t)	Preservationists are NIMBYs who oppose affordable housing
	4	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	5 (t)	Historic preservation limits affordable housing production
	5 (t)	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
Rocky Mountains	1	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient
	2 (t)	Historic preservation prevents density
	2 (t)	Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive
	4	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	5	(Multiple arguments tied for 5 th)
Pacific	1	Historic preservation limits affordable housing production
	2 (t)	Historic preservation prevents density
	2 (t)	Preservationists are NIMBYs who oppose affordable housing
	4	Historic preservation is not inclusive/elitist
	5 (t)	Historic buildings are difficult to make energy efficient

Question 10 – Overall, what is the status of historic preservation in your community?

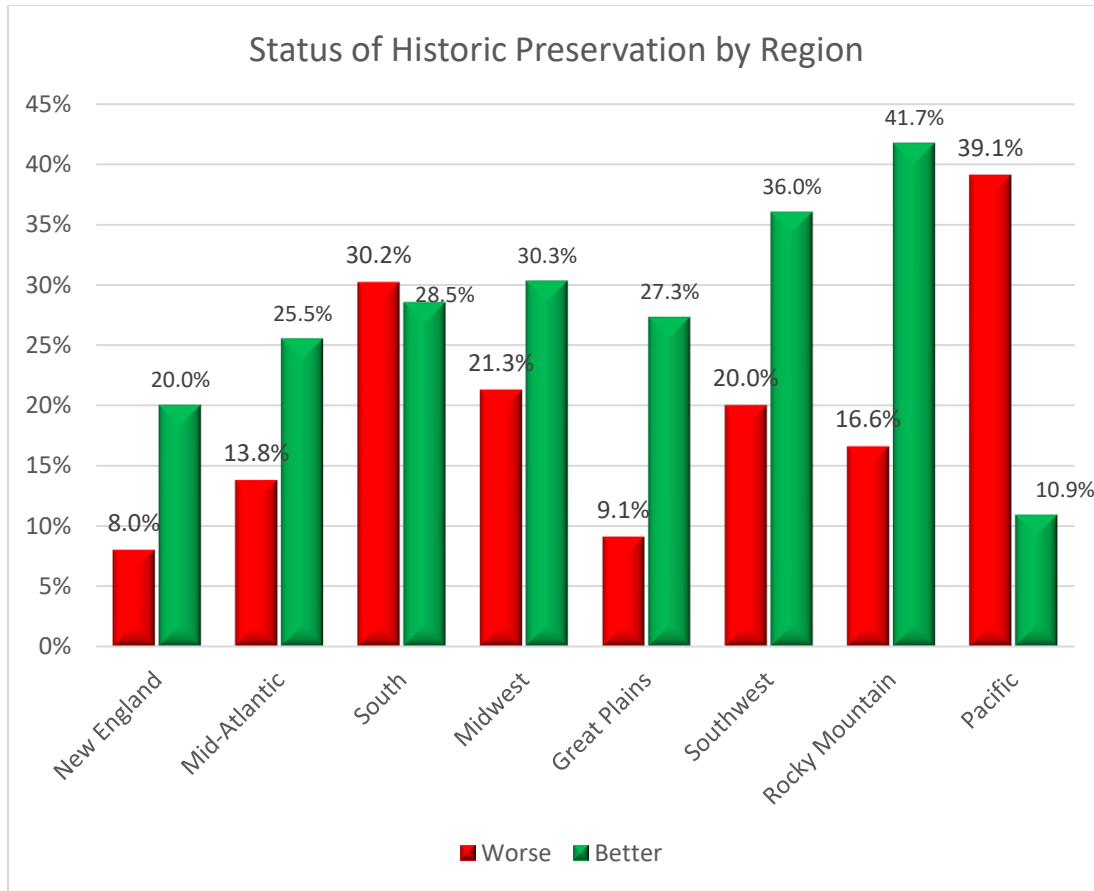
So, what is the status of historic preservation today? Statistically the responses form an almost perfect bell curve, with approximately the same number of respondents saying things are better than a year ago (26.5%) as saying they are worse (22.9%) and half (50.7%) saying things have stayed about the same.



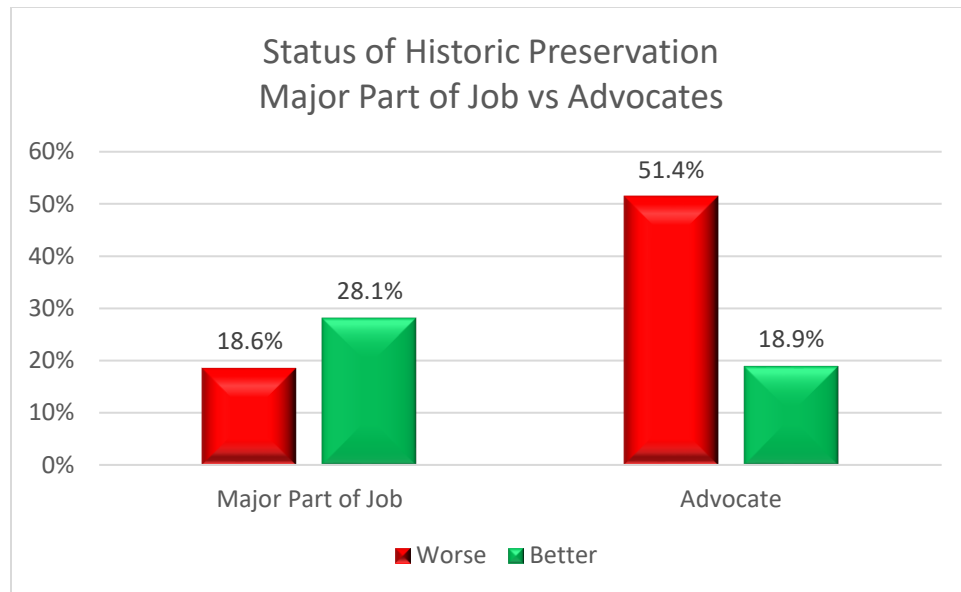
But when the responses were further sorted, some interesting divergences appeared. Respondents working in the public sector have a much rosier outlook: while 13.3% say things have gotten worse over the last year, 31.1% say they have gotten better. The non-profit sector is intriguing in that it has the highest percentage of respondents (22.4%) saying things have gotten worse, but also the highest percentage (34.1%) who say things have gotten better.



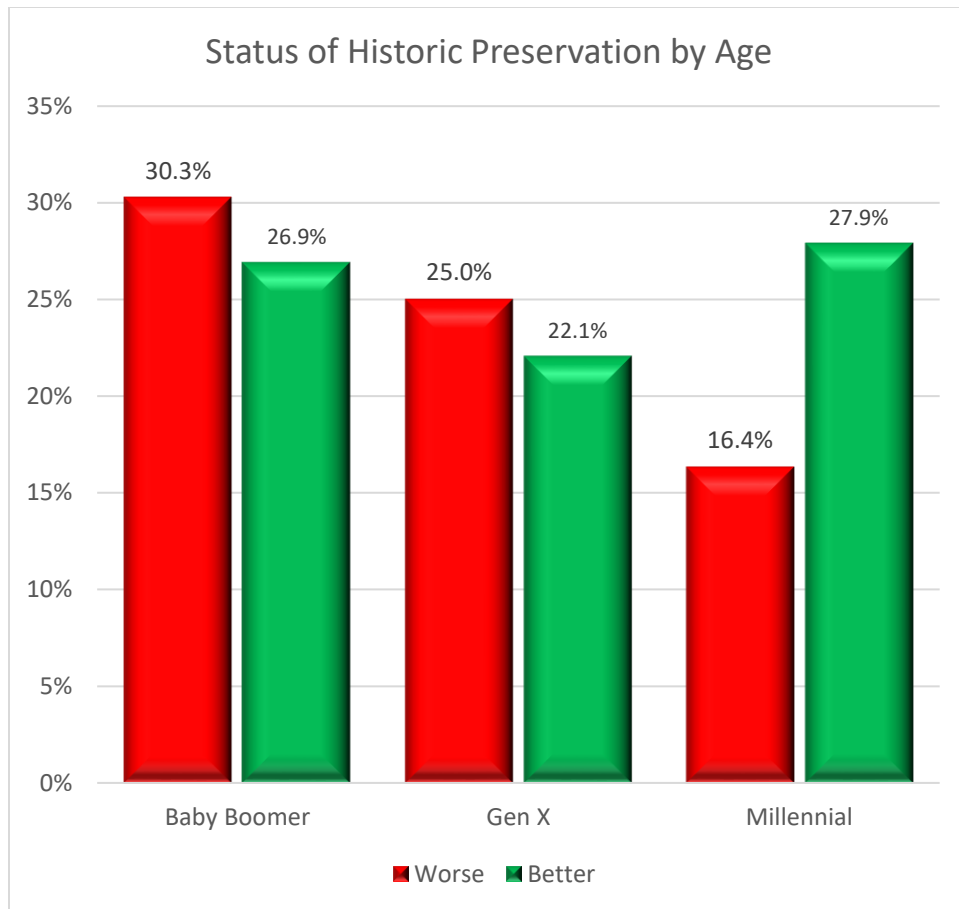
Regionally there are also substantial differences. Respondents from six of the eight regions have concluded that things are better than a year ago, even if only slightly. In the Great Plains, the Southwest, and the Rocky Mountain regions there is a substantial margin between “gotten better” and “gotten worse.” Respondents from the South give a slight edge to “gotten worse.” But preservation seems to be taking a huge hit in the Pacific region. Almost four times as many respondents from the West say that things have gotten worse than say that they have gotten better.



PresPoll respondents for whom historic preservation is a major part of their job see things going in the right direction, with the “getting better” responses (28.1%) significantly higher than the “getting worse” responses (18.6%). There is a markedly different perspective, however, from those who do not work in the field but are advocates for historic preservation. More than half of that group (51.4%) think preservation is worse off than a year ago as compared to 18.9% who think things are better.



Perhaps the brightest finding of this PresPoll is that the younger the preservationist the more positive the direction of preservation is perceived. It may be the optimism of youth, the excitement over seeing the preservation movement evolved beyond a sole focus on architectural grandeur, the emergence of social equity and affordable housing priorities among some preservation commissions, or other reasons. But the difference in perspectives is dramatic. More of both Baby Boomers, and Gen Xers think that things have gotten worse for preservation over the last year than those who believe it has gotten better. Millennials, however, have a very different sense. While 16.4% think things have gotten worse, almost 28% (27.9%) think they have gotten better. With each of these three generations the impression that good things are happening in preservation correlates with age: in the older generations a higher percentage of respondents say things are getting worse and in the youngest a higher percentage say things are getting better.



Conclusions

So, at the end of Preservation Month, 2022, what is the status of historic preservation in the United States? It is clear that preservation is under assault on multiple fronts. Preservation is accused of preventing affordable housing, precluding density, causing gentrification, and being a NIMBY movement. There is plenty of evidence for preservationists to counter those arguments. But it appears preservationists have not been as effective as the opposition in making the case. Survey responses indicating more anti-preservation than pro-preservation candidates elected; more significant historic buildings demolished than rehabilitated; more cuts to preservation budgets than increases; more preservation initiatives blocked than local historic districts created are all signs that the case for preservation needs to be made more effectively.

The most common argument against preservation, however, merits attention. “Historic preservation makes maintenance too expensive.” Is that true? If so, what are preservationists doing about it? Are we finding ways to reduce costs? Being sufficiently flexible to allow cost effective responses? Providing tools, incentives, strategies to mitigate maintenance costs? There has been systematic analysis of the issues of density, affordability, gentrification. Has there been similar analysis on the maintenance cost issue? This PresPoll did not answer that question, but preservation advocates need to.

It is not all bad news. Preservation successes have included recognizing historic structures significant to previously underrepresented groups, saving buildings that had been on endangered lists, and conducting successful public education campaigns.

But perhaps the most hopeful finding from this survey is the belief among younger preservationists that things are getting better rather than getting worse. Because of the size of their generation, their rapid emergence into positions of leadership in the preservation world, and their understanding of the broad range of roles that preservation can play, Millennials are in the driver's seat of preservation. Their optimism is good news for all of us.