



# What's on the Horizon for Historic Preservation in 2023?

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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 mail list and through social media.

As 2022 is wrapping up it seemed appropriate to have a PresPoll about what's on the horizon for historic preservation in 2023 and what are preservation's greatest needs both on the national and local levels. 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 6,300 members. Additionally, we sent a link to the survey to our domestic mailing lists of more than 5,000.

The survey was open from December 12 through December 18, 2022. Two hundred four 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 near-term future of historic preservation. On the other hand, these are the people who are daily creating that future.

Two other aspects of this PresPoll should be noted. First, five of the ten questions asked about the respondents – 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, the last question in the survey was open ended, with nearly 75% of respondents offering an answer to "If there could be one change of any kind that would improve the environment for historic preservation, what would it be?" All of the 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

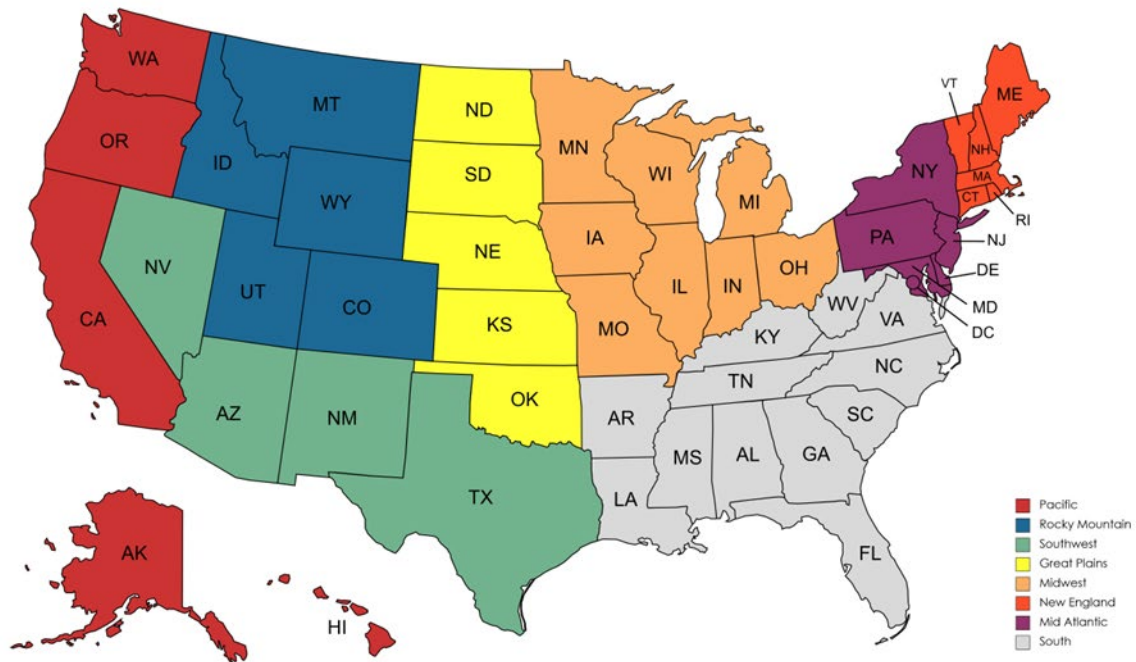
Based on the responses of 204 survey participants, here are the five most significant findings:

1. Most respondents believe 2023 the environment for historic preservation in 2023 will be a typical one, both on the national and local levels.
2. However, at the local level a higher share believe it will be a great year as well as a higher share believing it will be a terrible year.
3. Small town and rural respondents are the most optimistic about the environment for historic preservation in 2023.
4. Both Millennials and GenXers are more optimistic about 2023 than are Baby Boomers.
5. The greatest needs at both the national and local level is seen as political influence, closely followed by money and better legislation.

In an open-ended question, respondents gave more than 140 ideas on “... one change of any kind that would improve the environment for historic preservation.” There are many excellent ideas and observations. Our favorite one was this: “Historic preservation is economic development that makes people happy.”

## Question 1 – In what US Region to you live?

Responses were received from every region in the country with the Mid-Atlantic and the South together providing just over 44% (44.2%) of all responses.



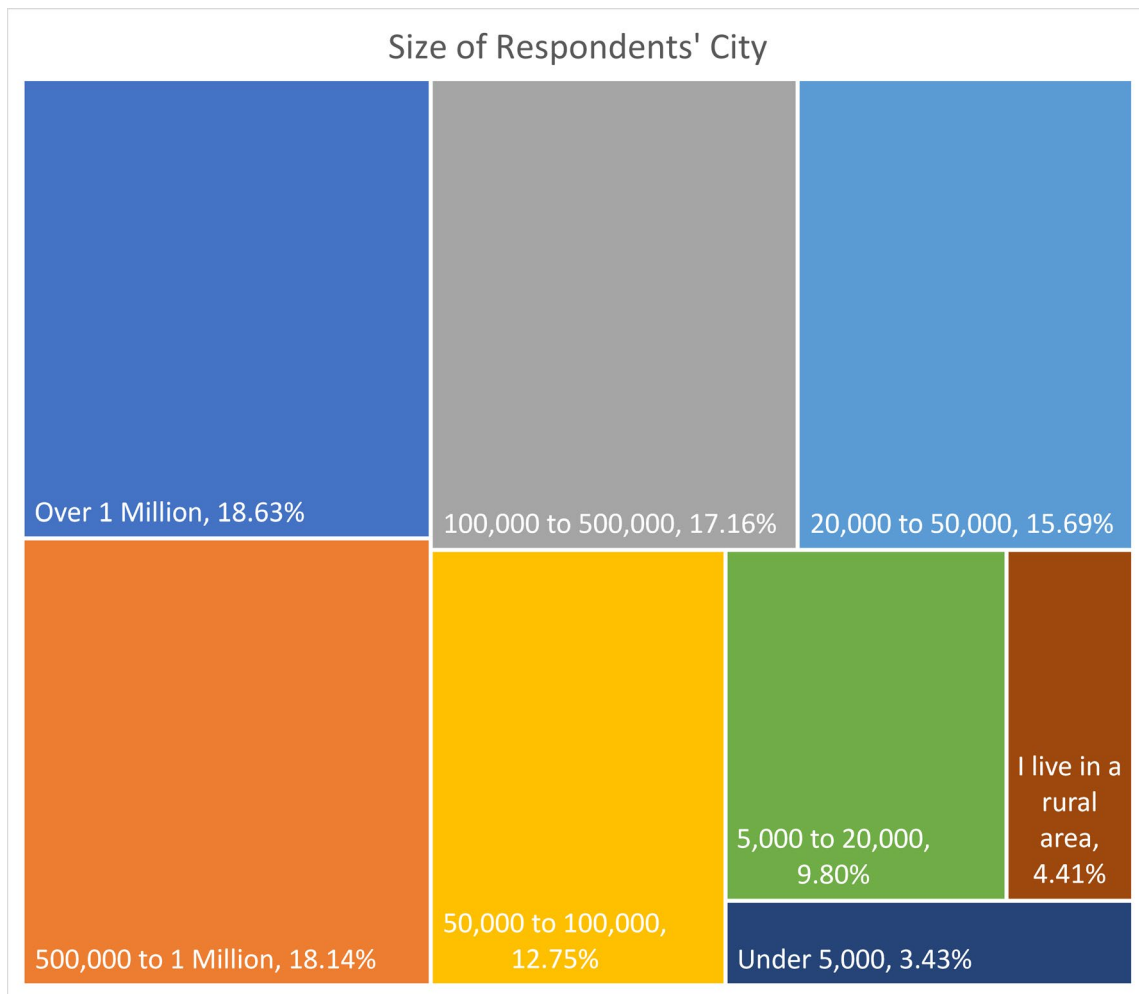
Pacific	Rocky Mountain	Southwest	Great Plains	Midwest	South	Mid-Atlantic	New England
14.7%	5.9%	5.9%	2.5%	18.1%	22.6%	21.6%	6.9%

I don't live in the United States – 1.0%

Other -- 1.0%

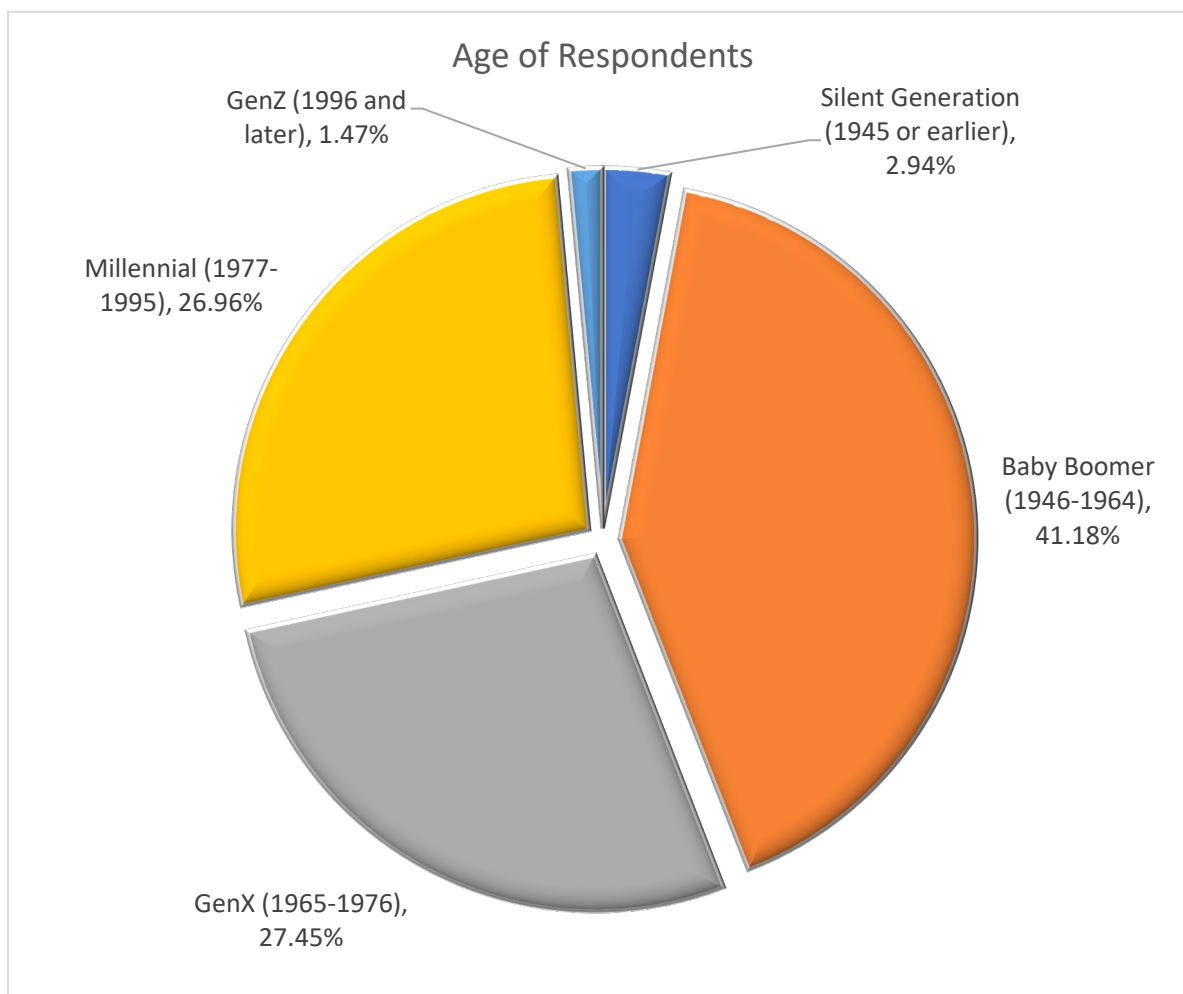
## Question 2 –What is the size of the city in which you live?

Survey respondents came from every size of community. A nearly equal share of respondents came from cities over 1 million, 500,000 to 1 million, and 100,000 to 500,000. Smaller places made up the rest of the respondent pool.



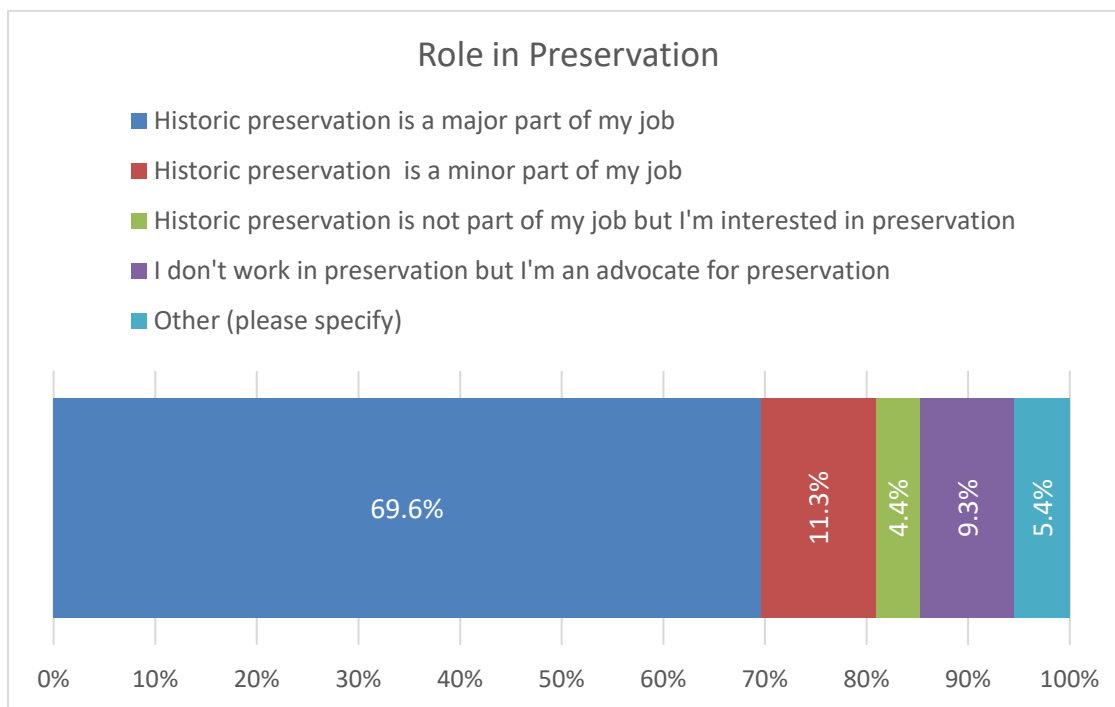
### Question 3 – In which generation were you born?

Preservationists come in all ages as did the respondents to this PresPoll. The largest age group was Baby Boomers at 41.2%, followed GenXers at 27.5% and Millennials at 27%.



## Question 4 – What is your role in historic Preservation?

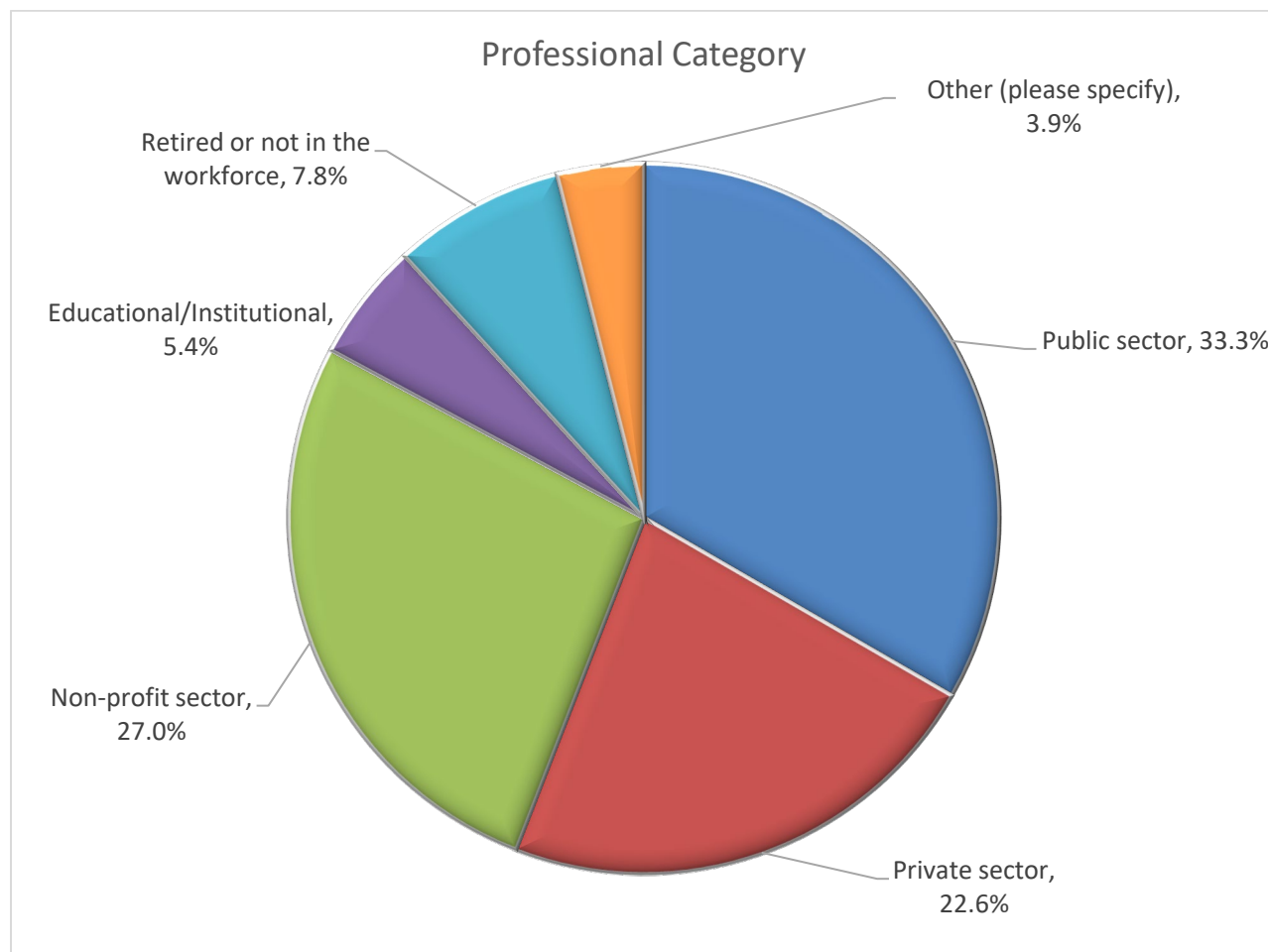
More than 2/3s (69.6%) of PresPoll respondents reported that historic preservation was a major part of their job. The second largest group at 11.3% was made up of those who reported that preservation was a minor part of their job.





## Question 5 – Which best describes your professional category?

Survey respondents represented a good balance of sectors, including 33.3% from the public sector, 22.6% from the private sector, and 27.0% from the non-profit sector.



## Question 6 – What do you think will be the environment for historic preservation nationally in 2023?

For this question respondents were given the scale below which allowed the answer to be 1 to 100.

6. What do you think will be the environment for historic preservation *nationally* in 2023?

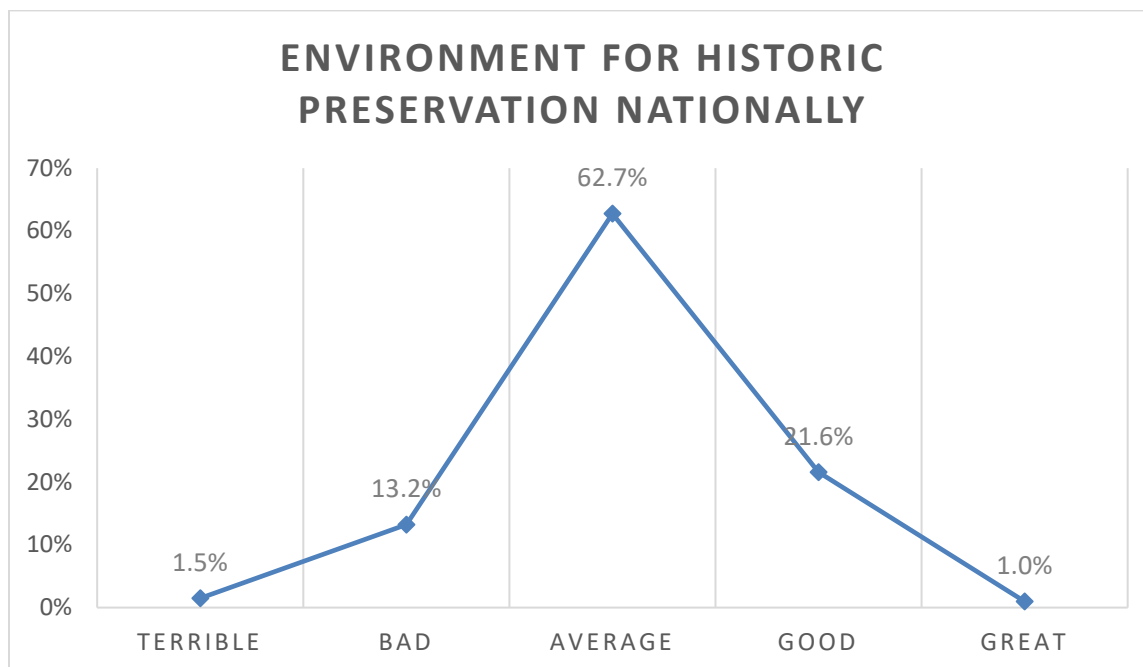
2023 will be the worst  
year ever for historic  
preservation

2023 will be a typical  
year for historic  
preservation

2023 will be the best  
year ever for historic  
preservation

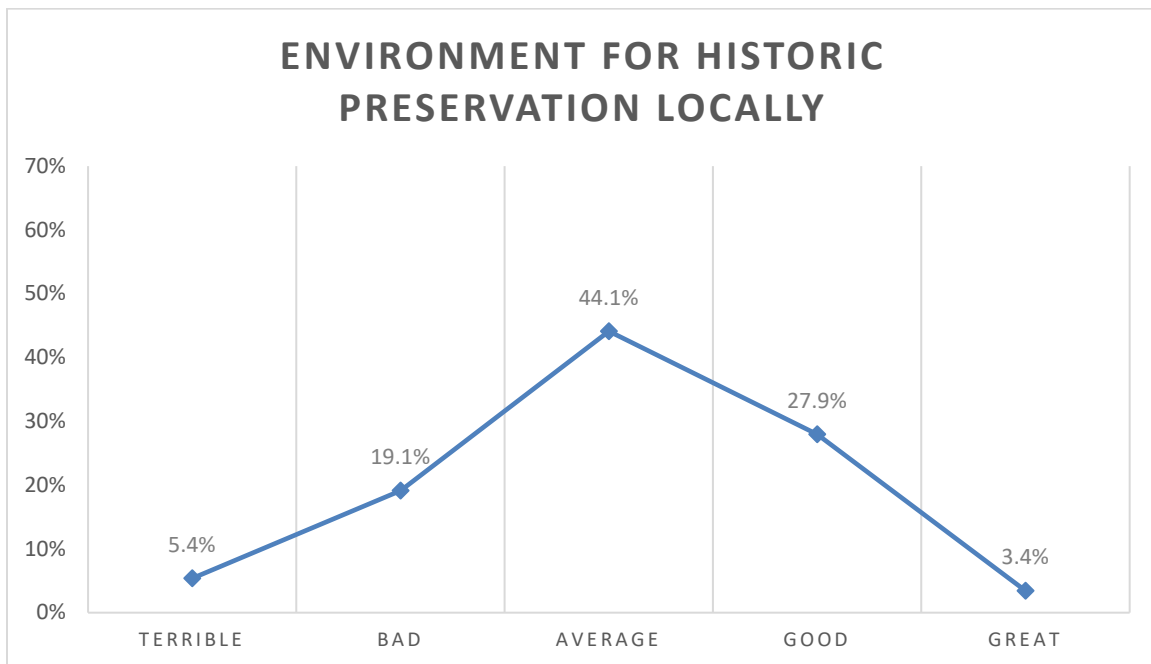
We then sorted the responses into five categories: “Terrible” (1-20), “Bad” (21-40), “Average” (41-60), “Good” (61-80) and “Great” (81-100)

Respondents are predicting an average year nationally in 2023, with nearly 2/3s seeing next year as OK. A slightly larger share thinks it will be a good year than a bad year.

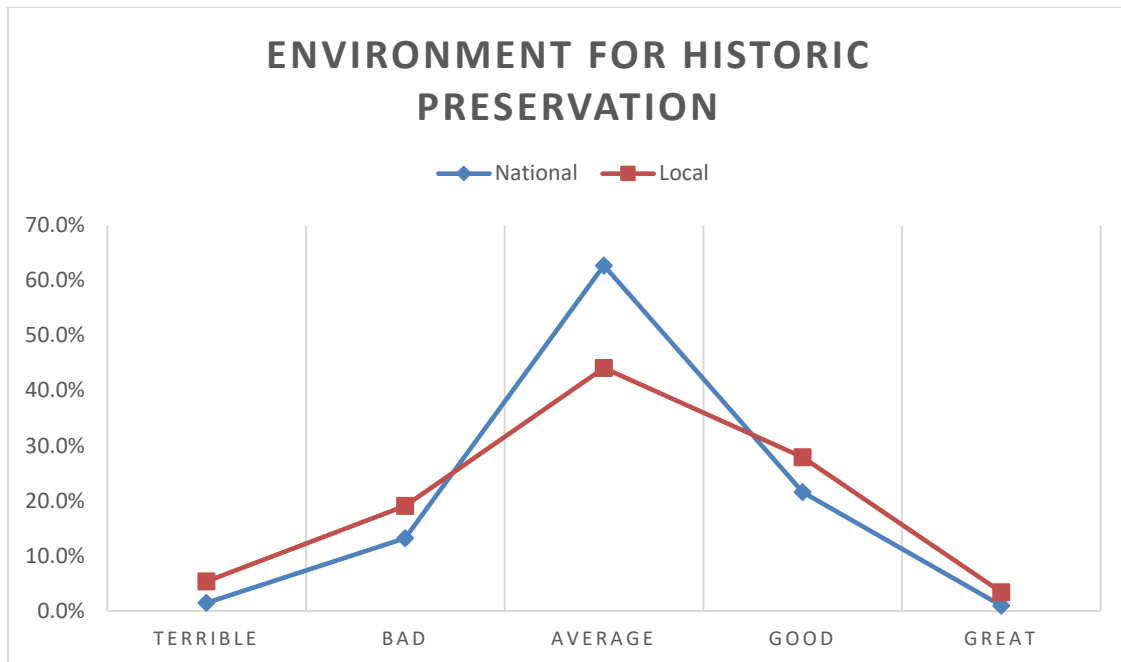


## Question 7 – What do you think will be the environment for historic preservation in your community in 2023?

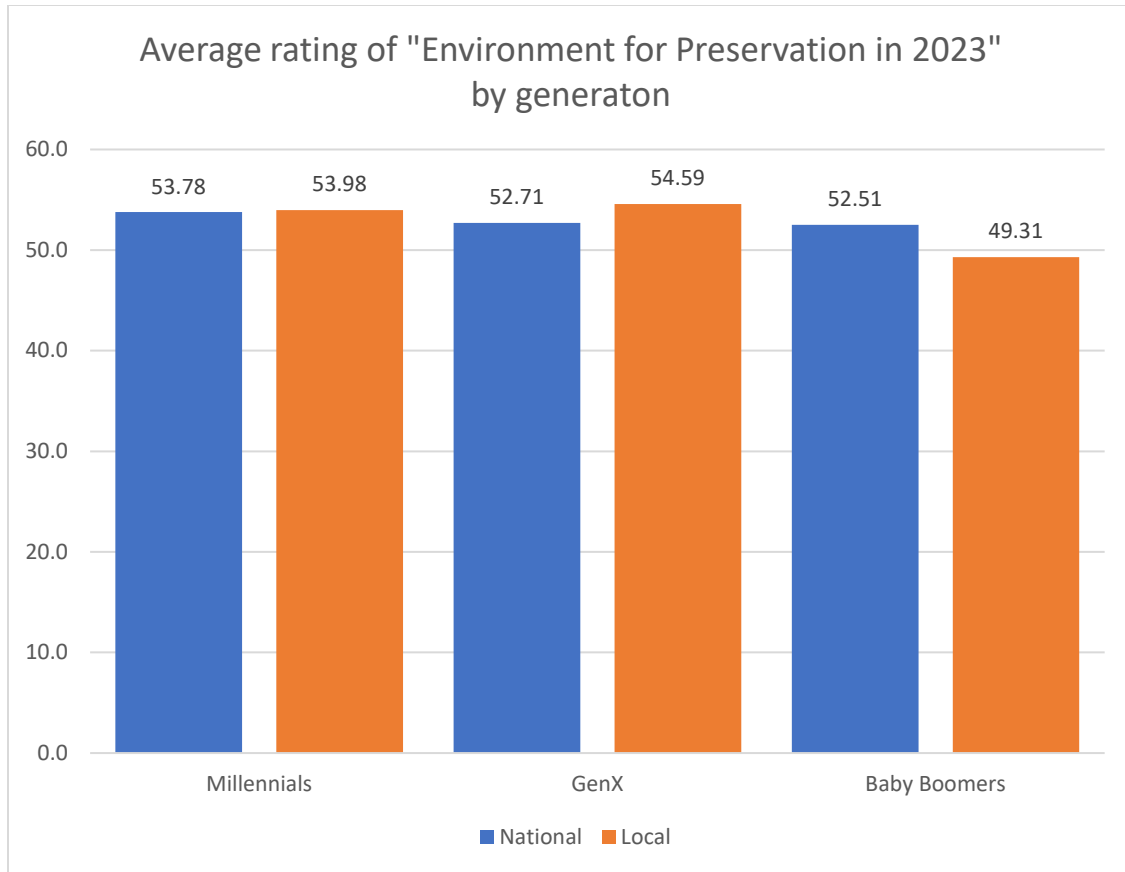
The same scale was used for Question 7 as Question 6, but for the local rather than national environment. When asked about the environment in their own community, less than half thought it would be an average year, with more believing it will be a good year than a bad year for preservation.



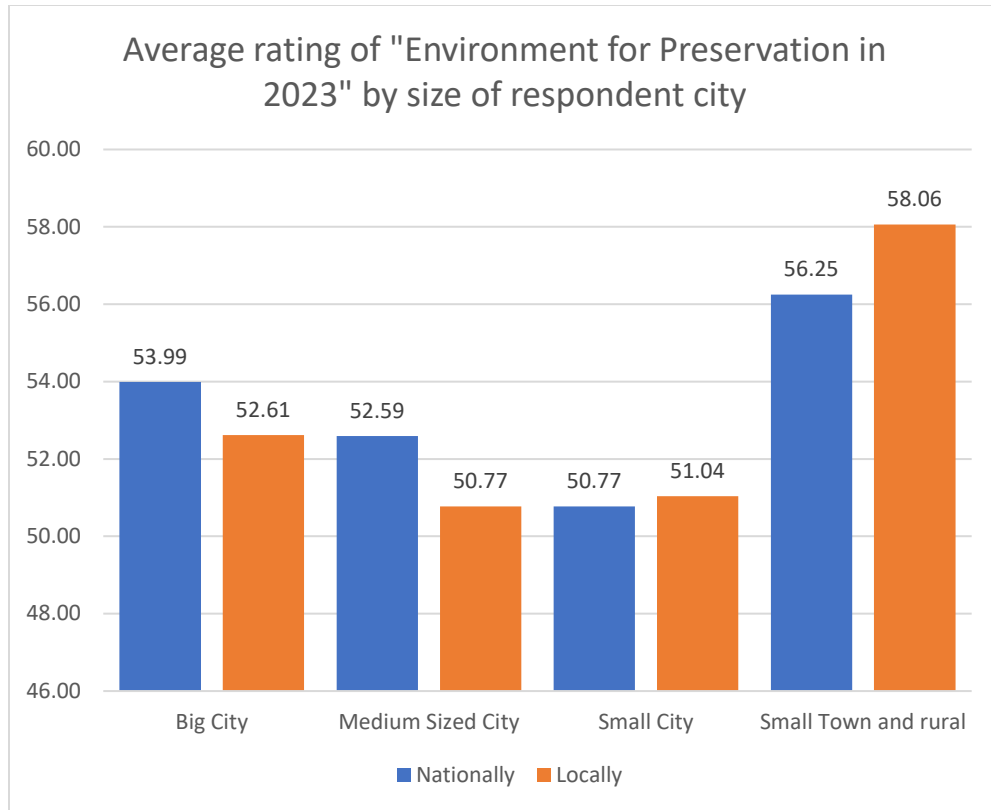
Perhaps reflecting that adage that all preservation is local, it is interesting to compare the national and local environment answers. There is both greater optimism and greater pessimism regarding their own community than for the national environment.



Although all generations generally see an average year for historic preservation on both the local and national level, Millennials are slightly more optimistic about the national level while GenXers are more optimistic about the local level. Baby Boomers are slightly more pessimistic about than either of the other two generations.

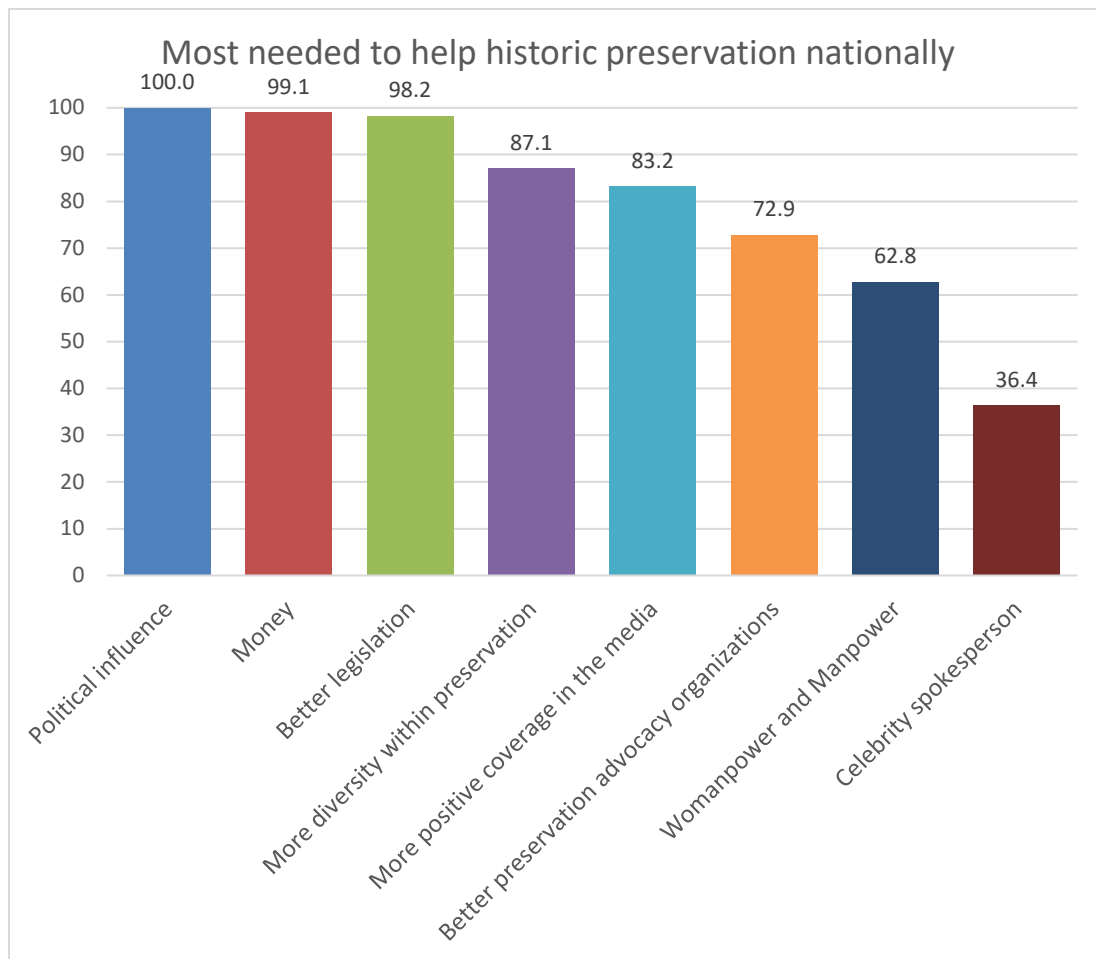


Respondents living in small towns and rural areas are most optimistic about the environment for historic preservation in 2023. The next most optimistic are their big city cousins.



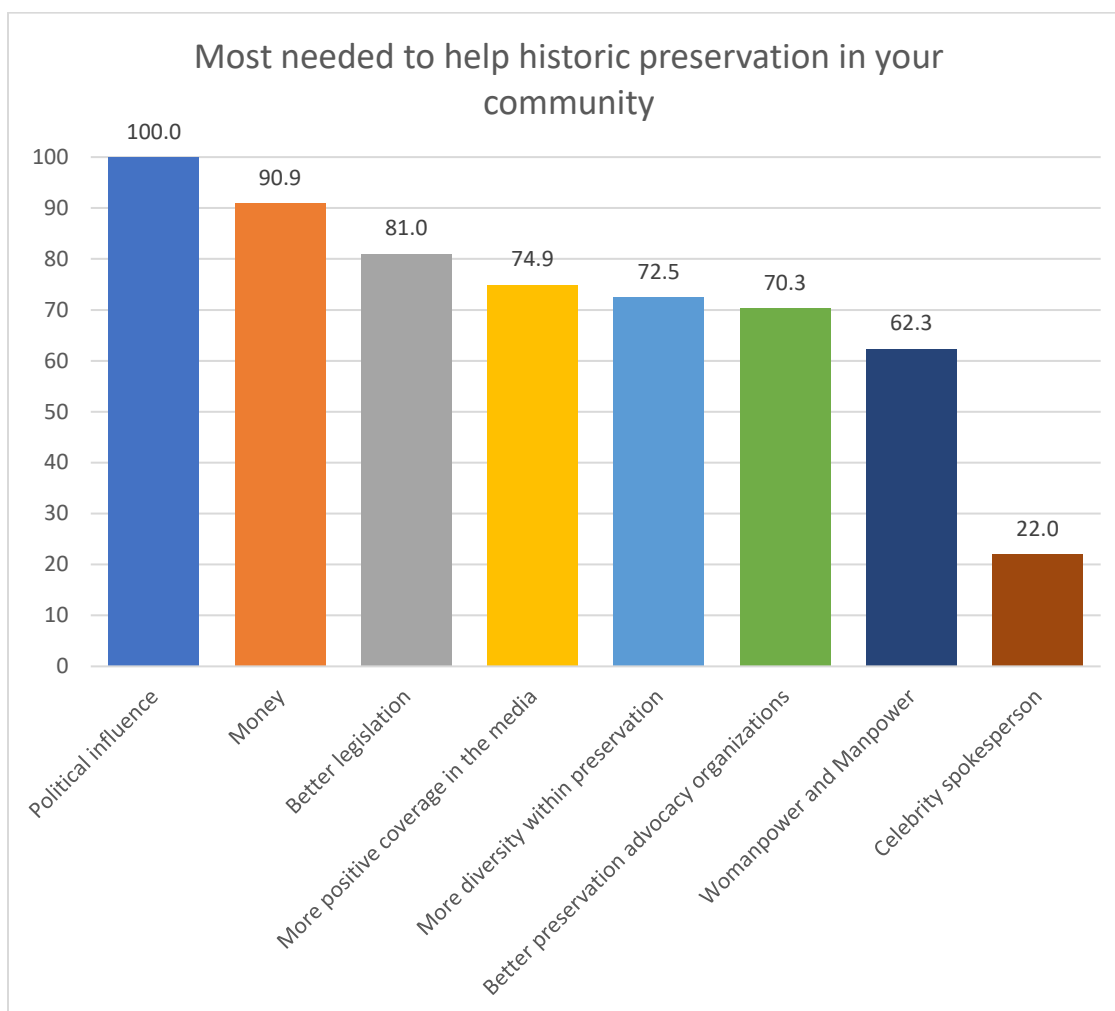
## Question 8 – Please rank which of these are most needed to help historic preservation nationally.

For this question respondents were given eight alternatives to rank in importance. Responses were then weighted by their frequency and their ranking position. The highest weight response (Political Influence) was then assigned a value of 100 with each of the others given its value relative to the top choice. After Political Influence came Money, Better legislation, and More diversity within preservation. Deemed relatively unimportant was a Celebrity spokesperson.



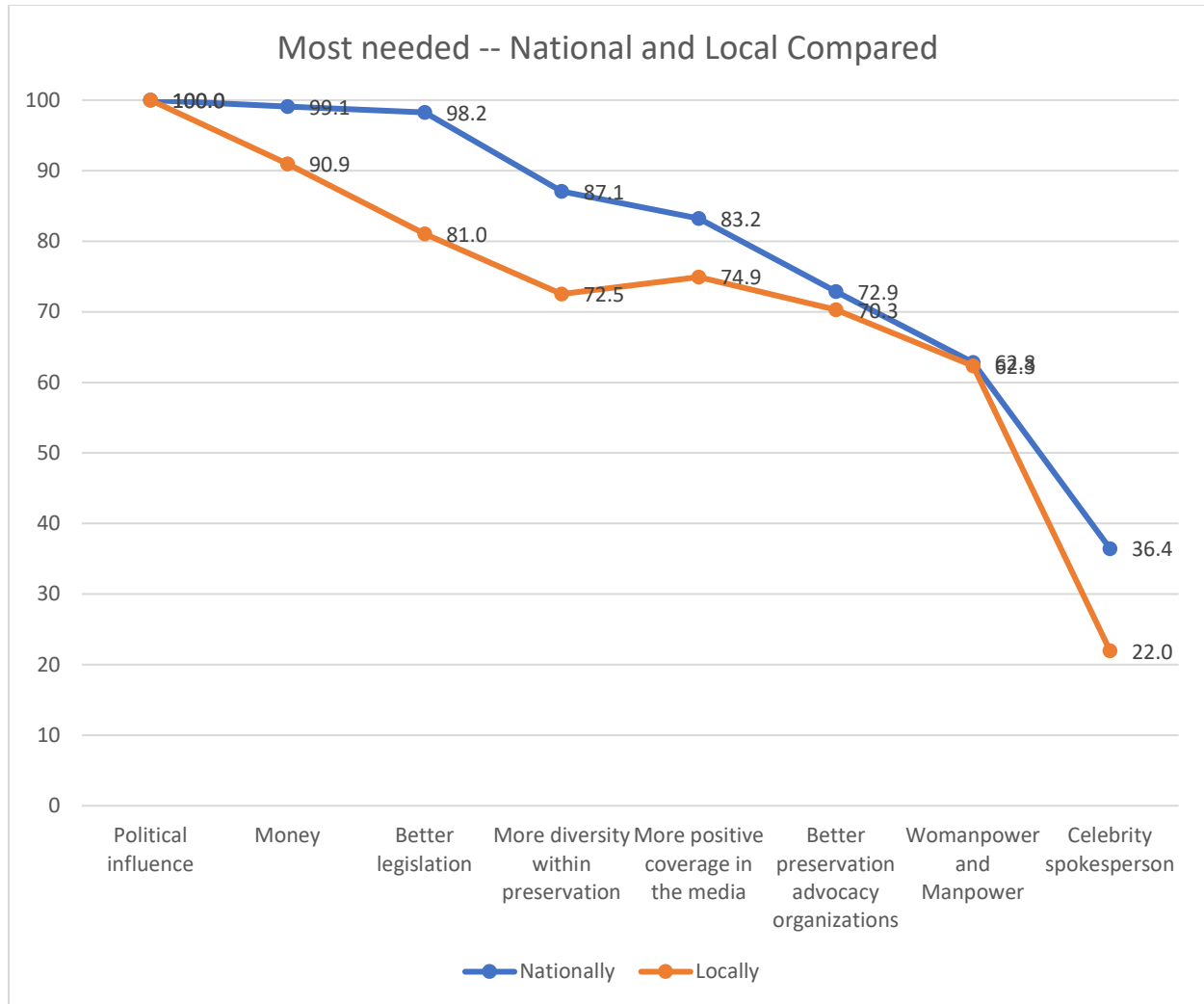
## Question 9 – Please rank which of these are most needed to help historic preservation in your community

Question 9 was essentially the same question but regarding the respondent's own community rather than the nation. The three top rated needs were the same locally as nationally but the number four spot locally was more positive coverage in the media.



While the order of the importance of needs was substantially the same nationally and locally, the magnitude of importance differed somewhat. At the national level Political influence, Money, and Better legislation were statistically ranked almost the same. At the local level, however, the need for Political influence was measurably greater than the next two choices.





## Question 9 and 10 Cross Tabulations

When look at through the lens of city size of respondent, generation, and employment sector, some differences appeared. Below are tables of the answer most frequently listed as the number 1 need by sub-groups.

Residents of large cities see the number one need for preservation nationally is more diversity within preservation. Money and Political influence are seen as most needed in every other combination of city size both locally and nationally.

Most Common #1 Identified Need by size of respondent's city				
	Big City	Medium Sized City	Small City	Small Town and Rural Area
National	More diversity within preservation	Political influence	Money	Political influence
Local	Political influence	Political influence	Money	Money

Generations of preservationists might not agree on all things, but they nearly universally thing that political influence is the number one need on both the national and local level.

Most Common #1 Identified Need by Generation			
	Millennial	GenX	Baby Boomer
National	Better legislation	Political influence	Political influence
Local	Political influence	Political influence	Political influence

All three sectors agree that Political influence is the greatest need at the local level. There are different answers from all three sectors at to the greatest need at the national level.

Most Common #1 Identified Need by Sector			
	Public Sector	Private Sector	Non-Profit Sector
National	Better legislation	Political influence	Political influence
Local	Political influence	Political influence	Political influence

## Question 10 – If there could be one change of any kind that would improve the environment for historic preservation, what would it be?

The final question was open ended and nearly three-quarters of respondents offered ideas. The comments are included unedited but divided into eleven categories: Advocacy, Diversity/Inclusion, Environmental, Financial Tools, Funding, Housing, Knowledge & Education, Policy, Political, Regulatory, and Other.

### Advocacy

- Better and more widely circulated rebuttals of statements, articles, and papers that ridicule and/or blame historic preservation, especially those with incorrect supporting data or none at all.
- Better national leadership on this issue - where is the National Trust? Everything went downhill after Dick Moe - love him or not
- Change the "new is better" mentality
- Decision of the NTHP board.
- don't call it historic preservation
- Emphasis on the built environment over new construction
- End opposition to the Obama Presidential Center.
- Focus on integration, rather than preservation. Integration of the history and physical elements of historic buildings and places into the present.
- Focus on making it market driven...push or pull the demand and supply curves.
- Get off our asses and actually change policy in a way that help people save the places they care about.
- Get past old stereotype myths that seem to be resurfacing.
- Getting rid of the negative ideas about preservation (not allowing for change, etc.)
- Greater coverage of the economic benefits, the climate effects, keeping paychecks local, etc.
- HGTV, manufacturers, real estate and development are many forces against the one. It's overwhelming.
- how to get information about why preservation is important. The real estate industry has been remiss in their disclosures. This is a major problem in our area. Larger grants to help people do work on their buildings
- How to show that progress doesn't mean you have to tear everything
- I would be to create some sort of "Watch" category for buildings and spaces that are in the right or coming to the right 'age or influence' in a community's history as to be made important BEFORE they age out of reparability and restoration. We know costs are high, but there is almost no community awareness, just attitude among a few, and education and engagement are needed to "sell" the idea of preserved is reserved for future people..and one of the best ways of being green and thoughtful in a graying, darkening world.

- Like almost everything-focus on things that everyday working class people are passionate about—our homes, our institutions and our environs
- Measure economic growth based on buildings saved, and not on new buildings built.
- Measuring and demonstrate the socio-economic impact of historic preservation projects
- Messaging. As a group, preservationists have failed at messaging when it comes to our connection to affordability and climate change. We've been trying to connects the dots in these areas for decision makers and they still aren't hearing us.
- Messaging. Dial back on the rhetoric of regulation, focus on why a building should matter BEYOND its architectural significance, how people might emotionally connect with it.
- more advocacy for preservation in all its forms at the national level
- More people that identify as preservationists including urbanists, so there is a larger tent
- More tradespeople willing to assist property owners with life-cycle & long-term costs analyses that illustrate the benefits of preserving tangible history
- Positive media coverage.
- Preservationist not attacking their peers and the public. At times we're our own worst enemy.
- Public opinion and understanding of what preservation is/does. I was recently equated with a "Karen" because I didn't want a chain restaurant obliterating a small historic storefront that has historically had a small, independent business. There's little ability to see the layers, and on the preservation side, it doesn't help that my "allies" also don't use appealing language. We can't say words like "quaint" and "charming" anymore--it's tone deaf.
- Recognition that preservation is economic development that makes people happy.
- Respect for preservation of all kinds & no questions asked-as in, preservation is ALWAYS a given.
- So much of the press is leans to progress. We are working on a downtown historic district and I see us, as well as the bigger cities near us, just getting slammed in the press. We have a reputation of stopping progress. In muddying-up situations. I'm a Historic Preservation Commissioner and even the City is afraid to back us for what it might look like politically. We need an image overall. From National on down. We need to focus on story-telling and about how once these places are gone, they are gone. About human scale, about community, about history, about the environment... any and all angles to redirect what preservation is. Preservation is forward thinking. We see the full arc of history, not just temporary and monetary. We need an image makeover. We are currently getting killed in the paper and on social media who think we are out of touch and it's so disheartening.
- Stop the censorship of academic research particularly the work of John Hans Gilderbloom who's website was scrubbed by the University of Louisville
- Stronger advocacy
- That everyone would value and work to preserve and present all examples of history, even painful histories.
- That saving historic resources is prudent.
- The National Trust playing a true national leadership role in preservation.
- To stop looking at preservation as in a bubble and start looking at it as one way to contribute to a meaningful community.
- Better PR- reuse of existing buildings is better for the environment, affordability, walkability, community, and just about everything else but HP is so stuck on whether or not something

checks a box as historic, and all the rules to prevent change, that we don't make broader connections and partner with other advocates to achieve mutual goals. Most of what we're preserving doesn't need to be preserved- it needs to be adapted, upgraded, and reused so let's focus our efforts there.

- A desire to work toward common goals.
- Better storytelling about why NOT to tear down historic buildings and how to take better care of them before they are too far gone to be saved.

### Diversity/Inclusion

- Addressing claims of elitisms and inclusivity as a reason to not have historic districts
- Broadening the federal standards to be more inclusive and encourage more diverse stories to be told.
- Diverse communities valuing preservation.
- increase the number of people of color in preservation
- Increased involvement and interest from younger generation.
- More diversity in all aspects of preservation... the public, advocates, historical preservation organizations, and money.
- More diversity in the field, access to incentives, political support. I know that's more than one :)
- More diversity in the field.
- More inclusive and flexible, to encourage more communities to connect with preservation, and improving its relationship with other vital social issues (including sustainability and housing)
- There needs to be more support from younger generations to step into leadership roles.

### Environmental

- a carbon tax on new materials and waste creation!
- A recognition that historic preservation should be a significant part of the discussions going on around climate change (embodied carbon, reuse/recycle, etc.)
- A visible, positive promotion of saving historic places while also promoting environmental issues. Clear exceptions for preservation projects and not allowing electric car charging stations, etc. to supersede preserving important historic resources.
- advocate for historic preservation as an environmental necessity.
- At the national and state level: 1. Incentives/policies that merge climate change goals with hp; 2. Less focus on the NR and more focus on other tools - esp multi-disciplinary ones that help communities meet other goals (l.e. legacy businesses, conservation districts)
- Better connection between historic preservation and sustainability
- Better connection between historic preservation and the environmental movement.
- Better general understanding of the connection between preservation and carbon reduction. Most preservationists get it, but the general population does not.
- Better linkage to the environmental movement, which has strong support and is inextricably linked to preservation
- Better understanding of how new energy codes impact preservation projects, usually negatively, and what alternatives there can be.

- Capitalizing on the architecture field's new affinity for restoration over new construction and helping it reach the masses (and the environmental groups we should also be aligning with).
- Get away from the term 'Historic' and 'Preservation' and more about Conservation and Sustainability, Reuse, Environmental impacts and values for communities (health and financial).
- I think it's important to put more emphasis on preservation/reuse being good for the environment
- its role in sustainability needs to be common knowledge
- Realization by public that preservation can be a significant tool against climate change.
- Recognizing hp and cultural heritage as a crucial resource in the struggle for sustainability and response to climate change.
- resilience to disasters
- Strengthening the tie to environmental responsibility (greenest building is the one already built)
- The fact that a historic and/or existing buildings are more "green" than a new building!

#### Financial Tools

- better incentives - both monetary and regulatory.
- federal tax credit expansion for small projects
- Incentives for adaptive reuse with additional incentives that celebrated original materials, such as original windows but with an incentive to build custom storm windows. Also, incentives for SFDs, not just commercial or investment properties.
- Incentives for people migration to reuse buildings in under populated communities
- Incentives to preserve buildings as part of a national strategy to combat climate change
- More support and incentives from local Governments
- More value

#### Funding

- A national fund for stewardship of cultural heritage should address climate action with funding to be from revenue from sale of renewable resources.
- Direction of ARPA funding to include preservation instead of replacement
- Federal funds for local historical preservation to counteract the money going into 5-over-1 apartment complexes that detract from the historic nature of a city.
- Funding
- More funding
- More funding nationally and locally, diversity in the field, and more positive media coverage.
- More funding!!
- More opportunities for funding - grants, credits, etc., especially locally. It's hard to require historic properties to make expensive repairs/restorations when there is no financial help of any kind.

#### Housing

- Broader discussion on how historic preservation is NOT a barrier to affordable housing and climate change.

- For preservationists to be stronger advocates for the issues affecting people's lives, chiefly housing affordability.
- Massive medium density housing mandates. Need to acknowledge quality of affordable EXISTING multi family neighborhoods

#### Knowledge & Education

- A better understanding of the purpose of historic preservation.
- A change in the mindset that historic preservation regulations restrict economic growth and take away private property rights.
- an understanding of what it is and what it means to a community and its future, especially future generations.
- Appreciation of craftsmanship and originality with a move away from mass production
- Awareness, and action rather than reaction.
- Better general understanding of the value of our architectural heritage
- Broader recognition of its benefits, value, etc. across sectors (i.e. real estate, climate resilience, economic growth, quality of life) in public perception. It's the age-old problem. I don't know if the solution is more informed media, more aggressive PR on behalf of preservation's value, celebrity spokesperson, etc. Money is a close second ;)
- Comprehensive understanding that preservation IS environmental sustainability and a critical tool to ameliorate climate change.
- Convincing other related fields that they do and benefit from preservation
- Create more trusted studies to demonstrate the financial feasibility of maintaining old structures rather than building new.
- Dispelling the myth that historic preservation is for rich folks wanting to gentrify their neighborhoods to keep others out.
- Educate professional urban planners so they stop targeting historic areas for redevelopment. This is especially important for smaller communities where the historic areas may be a larger percentage of the whole community so there is so much at risk.
- Education
- Education and positive examples showing that preservation is a sustainable and financial option/alternative to buying/building new.
- Education in schools and elsewhere about the critical role of preserving heritage structures in fighting climate change.
- Education in schools.
- Education opportunities for resources
- Get regular architects educated in preservation as part of licensing. Update regulations to reflect current best practices and state of knowledge: example: condition and layperson appearance does not equal integrity or significance.
- I wish preservation happened more naturally and was less intentional.
- Include more cultural and public history. Preservation is largely regulatory and therefore seen as cumbersome for those involved. We need to fan out to get "regular folks" involved and engaged.

- Increased number of contractors/trades people that are versed, knowledgeable, and interested in effectively working on/with older/historic buildings.
- Introduction to Historic Preservation courses for developers and real estate professionals, and creation of more historic districts in regions across the country.
- Local history needs to be taught so that members of the community begin to identify with the communities culture, heritage and accomplishments. That identity if taught in a positive way can become a source of pride, helping the community members find their purpose, create change where it needs to take place, preserve the past so others know what they have come through & continue building a legacy for future generations.
- LOTS more media coverage, with personal stories
- Making it a financially accessible field. Access to the field is often financially unrealistic. To achieve diversity and inclusivity, emerging professionals need a living wage.
- More education regarding the positive economic numbers for Historic Preservation.
- More practitioners - consultants, professional staff at all levels, those in the construction trades
- More support and exposure for trades education programs.
- More support for trades education
- People do not understand the economics of preservation. Whether that is due to politics, other competing favors controlling the narrative, \$, I'm not sure. But until that gets better, we will face high levels of burn out, low pay, and ineffectiveness. It is also hard to be taken seriously as a field when Sol standards can be interpreted vastly differently by various professionals. To the lay person, it appears that we make all this up, and having worked in the field since the 1980s I don't entirely disagree with that viewpoint....
- Preservation done right is extremely expensive and there is little skill out available. Unfortunately lots of money and a skilled (and knowledgeable) workforce
- Public believing there is value
- School System Administration education of the benefits of HP statewide ASAP. The general approach to historic school buildings in Michigan by School Boards and Administrations is to immediately tear down historic school-buildings so that they do not become Charter Schools. And basically no clue or reasonable response to reuse for their own schools use or reuse by private development. We seem to be losing so many historic schools, especially pre WWII, everyday.
- Stop the mindset that in order to flip an older house, all of the windows, siding, floors, etc. need to be replaced.
- Teaching historic preservation advocacy to the younger generation and continuing throughout their schooling
- To get people to understand it's an important tool that can help so many, not just a way for rich people to preserve nice houses (we know this, but others don't)

### Policy

- More and better integration with planning, zoning, and land use policy development across the board



- More effective STATE level work. HP has become incredibly bureaucratic and it sometimes feels like the SHPO is not actually advocating for preservation, but simply administering the needs of the DOT.
- Preservation forms the foundation of all the decision making regarding revitalization and inclusion and population embraces preservation from the grassroots up as a tool for planning
- Relevance to current pressing issues

#### Political

- A major hurdle we face is personnel in public offices or positions putting individual desires before the community. The sense of civic duty and consideration of the population continues to diminish resulting in destruction of cultural places.
- A more unified voice on housing and preservation advocacy in the media and in the legislature.
- Better political support, backed up with strong, effective policies and funding opportunities. We desperately need to make a more effective case in the housing discussion (for hot markets facing a housing crisis) as we're losing lots of character buildings and harming once-intact neighborhoods without thoughtful planning. Thanks.
- Better support from City Council
- Better understanding and sympathy by politicians
- Better understanding, appreciation, support, enforcement, and funding of preservation by elected officials and bureaucrats at all levels of government - city, county, regional, state and federal.
- Elected officials on all levels-national, state, local- who understand the benefits of preservation and are preservation-friendly.
- End "private property rights"
- Get developer money out of the decision making.
- Have stronger advocates in national and state legislatures
- Legislative requirements for preservation.
- Political will to enforce existing rules and regulations and consistency in enforcing them.
- There needs to be a reduction of divisive political rhetoric, which has distracted our national leaders from addressing our nation's serious needs and issues in a constructive way.

#### Regulatory

- Certification for professionals working in the field
- Better Community Ordinances that are not siloed, understood, respected, and enforced.
- Consequences for deliberate neglect or destruction of historic resources.
- Demolition review policies based on full life-cycle carbon impacts
- Design/development standards that apply to the ENTIRE community, to both historic districts and new development - in essence, good design everywhere, without treating historic preservation as a separate thing.
- Easier HTCs
- Effectively return HTC reviews to a rehabilitation standard instead of the preservation standard currently being applied

- Financial and legal penalties for demolition of historic structures, not just incentives to redevelop.
- Get the NPS to assign/award GAOA projects faster!
- In my opinion, local government preservation needs to move away from devoting the bulk of its resources regulating things like regulating windows in residential historic districts and become more proactive, becoming stewards of historic resources and asset managers and partnering with community development organizations to deliver positive outcomes to the community. Housing challenges are the biggest practical and political issue we have currently, and an emphasis on low density high end residential areas is not a winning proposition.
- more flexibility in local programs and in the way buildings are repurposed
- More laws to slow demolition
- More protection and funding for historic structures and landscapes at the federal and state level.
- Preservation laws such as Section 106 on the state and local level
- Protection
- Strong legislation can be changed by just a few in power. Sadly Florida is learning this in spades. Unfortunately folks do not understand the ramifications of what is happening.
- Stronger enforcement of existing preservation laws by federal agencies and historic preservation commissions
- Updates and improvements to legislation
- Upzoning is destroying historic fabric in Seattle - the history of redlining is being used to encourage destruction of century old structures. The city is not requiring destroyed buildings be salvaged for materials. Seattle is not green.

#### Other

- A weak economy

## Conclusions

While 2023 is seen as a typical year for historic preservation, both nationally and locally, significant needs are seen. Topping the list is increased political influence. The open-ended responses reinforce the quantitative results with comments falling in the “Advocacy” and “Knowledge and Education” sections by far the most common. With the country significantly polarized politically, it will be interesting to see if preservationists can succeed in making their case on both sides of the aisle at the national, state, and local level. That has been a strength of preservation advocacy efforts in the past. If 2023 is going to be more than the “average” year predicted, those bipartisan efforts will need to continue.