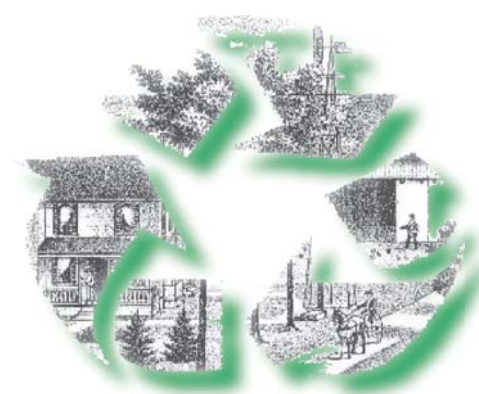




historic preservation: the "new" green?

"Historic preservation can – and should – be an important component of any effort to promote sustainable development. The conservation and improvement of our existing built resources, including re-use of historic and older buildings, greening the existing building stock, and reinvestment in older and historic communities, is crucial to combating climate change."

National Trust for Historic Preservation - www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/public-policy/our-position-on.html



What do the words **ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY, RECYCLING,** and **GOING GREEN** have in common? They are all easy ways to describe **historic preservation.** Though the term "historic preservation" is often viewed as protecting a community's history, it also protects the environment. In fact, preservationists will often tell you that the "greenest building is the one that is already built."



Depending upon how you look at it, historic preservation is not so new. The "recycling" of old buildings, structures, and other sites to tell the story of your community's history is an extremely green thing to do and a practice that has been applied for over a century. One of the pivotal moments in America's historic preservation history occurred in 1858 with the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association's campaign to save Mount Vernon. Little did the first preservationists know that this effort to "recycle"/save the place where "Washington slept" for its historic value would impact future historic preservation and environmental practices and policies.

"Going green" via historic preservation efforts in Will County were formally launched in 1976 with the drafting of Will County's Cultural and Historic Preservation Plan. In 1992, to further demonstrate its commitment to historic preservation, the County officially established its historic preservation program with the adoption of the its Historic Preservation Ordinance. This Ordinance created Will County's local landmark program

and Historic Preservation Commission to oversee historic preservation activities across the County's 24-township area. (Please note that the Commission's jurisdiction is primarily within unincorporated Will County.) By assisting your efforts to save the old building, structure, and other features of the County's historic landscape, the Commission strives to ensure that these places will be around for generations to come. The benefit is that by preserving your landmark, you are saving the environment as well.

In thinking about the design and structure of old buildings. You cannot help but notice the level of detail that went into their construction. From an energy efficiency standpoint, for example, what are often more decorative features on a new house (such as shutters), served an actual purpose on a historic one. Old houses were constructed with energy efficiency in mind. Southern houses were often designed with high ceilings while their northern counterparts had small windows and thick walls. Additionally, old buildings were constructed in practical ways that took into account the impact of climate in their ventilation designs. (Preservation Magazine [Jan./Feb. 2008], 21). If you own a historic building you can easily protect its character and the environment. It is often better to repair than to replace. For example, in many instances, repairing a historic window has



not only longstanding energy benefits, but economically, this can be much easier on your wallet. Additionally, on your old home, sometimes with just a few hours of your time, simple caulking or weather-stripping can save you energy and money!

Aside from recycling the actual shell of the building, preservationists are benefiting from new "green" technologies and science that provides rehabilitation opportunities that are energy efficient and "green." From using recycled materials such as wood



to energy efficient lighting, rehabilitation efforts on your historic building can be "green" and conducted in a manner that will continue to respect your building's historic character and be environmentally friendly. To learn more about

the incorporation of environmentally friendly technology and how to incorporate it into your historic rehabilitation efforts, please visit, www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/green_preservation.htm and www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/.

To learn more about the County's historic preservation program. The Commission can be reached at 815-727-8430. Also, please visit us online at www.willcountylanduse.com.

In addition to Will County, there are several municipalities within the County that have established historic preservation programs. They include:

- Aurora
- Bolingbrook
- Crete
- Frankfort
- Joliet
- Lemont
- Lockport
- Naperville
- Orland Park
- Plainfield

Did you know . . . ?

(Majority of statistics taken from National Trust for Historic Preservation website.)

- Buildings constructed yearly: **1,770,000**
- Amount of waste generated during construction of average 2,000-square-foot home: **3,000 lbs of wood; 2,000 lbs of drywall; and 600 pounds of cardboard**
- Buildings demolished annually: **290,000**
- Waste generated yearly from construction and demolition: **136 million tons**
- Portion of construction recycled or reused: **20% to 30%**
- Percentage of landfill waste resulting from construction and demolition: **10% to 30%**
- Recent calculations indicate that it takes **35-50** years for an energy efficient new building to save the amount of energy lost in demolishing an existing building.
- Amount of waste generated during construction of new single-family home: **4 pounds per square foot**
- Percentage of carbon emissions originating from the operation of the buildings that we live and work in: **43%**
- The **lifespan of an old window is over 100 years.** A new window has a life expectancy of about **25 years.**
- Number of County Historic Landmarks: **33 (and counting!)**



What you can do . . .

Below are just a handful of simple things you can do to "green" your historic home. (All information taken from nationaltrust.org/preservation. More tips are available on the website.)

1. Keep original windows intact - REPAIR, DON'T REPLACE.

Windows 60 years and older are made from old growth wood and have a rare durability that newer high quality wood windows lack.

2. Insulate the attic, basement, and crawl space. Contrary to common belief, heat loss occurs through your roof. Insulating your attic can have huge benefits.

About 20 percent of energy costs come from heat loss through the attic.

3. Reuse old materials (such as brick, stone, glass, and slate from a historic building that may not have been salvageable (although every effort to preserve it should have been conducted)) for home improvement projects.

4. Have an energy audit conducted on your home by your utility company or visit Home Energy Saver (<http://hes.lbl.gov>).

5. Plant trees.

Look at historic photographs of your home which show the vegetation. Through planting trees, you can enhance not just the historic character of your home, but also provide shade on hot summer days and a buffer on the cold and windy ones.