

# UC Berkeley

## The George Wright Forum

### **Title**

Comments on Carl Abbott's article

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#### **ABOUT THE GEORGE WRIGHT FORUM**

*The George Wright Forum* was the journal of the George Wright Society from 1981 through 2018, published in 35 volumes with a total of 125 issues. Its mission was to “examine critical issues and present new research related to parks, protected areas, and cultural sites around the world.” The hallmark of the journal was its interdisciplinary approach, covering all fields relevant to natural and cultural heritage stewardship.

Early volumes of the journal did not carry dates embedded on each page, so that information is provided on this cover sheet.

*The George Wright Forum* ceased publication at the end of 2018. Beginning in 2020, it is continued by *Parks Stewardship Forum*, an open-access journal co-published by the George Wright Society and the University of California, Berkeley, Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity. *Parks Stewardship Forum* continues both the mission and the interdisciplinary approach of *The George Wright Forum*. The first volume of *Parks Stewardship Forum* is denominated as Volume 36 to indicate this continuity. *Parks Stewardship Forum* is published at <https://escholarship.org/uc/psf> and has been selected by the Library of Congress to be archived as “an important and valuable addition to our collections and to the historical record.”

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You can also find *The George Wright Forum* through JSTOR at <https://www.jstor.org/journal/georwrigforu>.

When citing, please note that the definite article “The” is part of the journal's title.

#### **ABOUT THE GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY**

The George Wright Society supports parks, protected/conserved areas, cultural sites, and other kinds of place-based conservation by encouraging communication among and convenings of researchers, managers, educators, practitioners, and the public to facilitate informed decisions and actions that embrace our values.

GWS is a membership organization and we would welcome your support. To find out more, or to donate, please go to <https://www.georgewrightssociety.org>.

into the land-use planning process through conscious rezoning, conservation districts and overlay zones.

One of the great advantages of such an emphasis will be its price tag, for land-use planning tools are essentially free to the preservation effort. Planning commissions and planning department staffs are already available to assist the work of preservation if they are given specific tasks. Every city of significant size also has a redevelopment agency eagerly looking for programs that promise both public support and a chance of success. In addition, preservation has a wide potential appeal to neighborhood organizations whose basic goal is usually the conservation of community values and environment.

There is already a long list of possible models that illustrate the integration of historic preservation into the larger urban planning process.

Under the supervision of a Land Conservation and Development Commission, Oregon requires every local jurisdiction to prepare a comprehensive plan in accordance with a set

of statewide goals.

In cities as dissimilar as Cincinnati and Jacksonville, preservation efforts have been a tool for neighborhood organizing and have been integrated into larger community conservation strategies in cooperation with city agencies.

The "Main Street" project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation has shown that preservation can be a method for revitalizing downtown commercial districts in small cities and towns, making the everyday environment of past generations useful for the present.

The preservation movement in recent years has been criticized for blurring the distinction between buildings that are old and buildings that are historic. In fact, it is a distinction that we can live without.

The social value of historic preservation is to assist in the conservation of our towns and cities, including both their stock of housing and their sense of community. If the movement is a true success by 1990, we won't be able to tell where historic preservation stops and planning or neighborhood renewal starts. □

## COMMENTS ON CARL ABBOTT'S ARTICLE

*F. Ross Holland, Jr.*

I don't think any preservationists would quarrel with Mr. Abbott's proposal that historic preservation shift emphasis away from single historic structures and think broader—in terms of districts, streets, and complexes of buildings. Certainly, if historic preservation is to be used as a catalyst to revitalize cities, preservationists must think broader than indi-

vidual structures.

Actually, in his article Mr. Abbott articulates the current direction of historic preservation today. There are a large number of examples around the country that inspire people to think revitalization of a city through historic preservation.

Savannah, Georgia, for example, has long been acclaimed

for what it has done to rehab its inner city and waterfront through restoration of its old buildings. Perhaps just as important, though it has received less publicity, has been that city's successful restoration of its victorian row house district and the sale of these structures to low income people.

Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia catalyzed, beginning in the 1950s, the restoration of the Society Hill area in that city's downtown area. In more recent years the National Park Service, and state and local governments have combined to encourage the private sector to make Lowell, Massachusetts a viable and desirable city again through rehab of its old buildings, particularly the old cotton mills. The success of this effort was recently attested to in an article in a national magazine that listed Lowell as one of the choice places in which to live in this country.

Those who know Lowell only from its condition but a few years ago will read the previous sentence with incredulity.

Many more examples could be cited to illustrate the preservation of districts and towns, from mining towns in Colorado to districts in major cities, from the "Main Street" program of the National Trust to the

proposed cultural parks in the old industrial towns in New York state. The revitalization of the nation's waterfronts—of which Baltimore is a conspicuous, though but one, example—is based on historic preservation.

Most of these revitalization efforts are locally based, and they have received strong encouragement from federal programs, not in an effort to control what happens, but rather to encourage and respond to the local effort. The federal historic preservation program has not attempted to guide or tell the states or local people what to do. Indeed, the focus on the program has been on the State Historic Preservation Officer, and it is his office that is the backbone of historic preservation in this country. It is that office that guides and controls what goes on in the state as far as historic preservation is concerned. I mention this fact because it is popular to think of the "Feds" as controlling everything, whereas in actuality the Federal historic preservation program has always been highly decentralized.

I do not quarrel with the philosophy Mr. Abbott espouses, but I do feel that this philosophy is more firmly planted in preservationists' thinking than is generally recognized. □

