

A Window to Sustainability

Art Glass's Place in a Greener World • by the Architectural Art Glass Committee

The green movement continues to gain momentum on multiple fronts and nowhere is this more evident than in cutting edge building and design. "Sustainability" and "green building" are buzzwords

The challenge is to help ensure that the community at large will feel invested in the building through a connection to its aesthetic elements. When this connection is made, a building is "culturally sustainable".

that suddenly hold legitimate leverage with clients who are more conscious than ever about the environmental impact of new construction.

A similar rise to power has been mirrored in the preservation movement. Historic buildings and homes are no longer being razed with the rationale that it is cheaper to rebuild than to restore. Now passions

arise when there is talk of tearing down historic buildings and whole communities have risen up to protect the jewels of their past by using creative zoning and historic districts to mandate stewardship.

While the term sustainability is often championed as a relatively new and revolutionary idea, many of the principles have long been in practice by our predecessors. The design and construction of buildings now being preserved as historic, often utilized many of the same principles important to the sustainability movement.

This link between historic building preservation and sustainability can be looked at in two distinct ways.

First, the impact of preserving historic buildings to meet sustainability goals, and secondly, the concept of applying what historic buildings teach us when designing new sustainable buildings.

The common goals of historic building preservation and sustainability are fairly obvious and easy to link. A formal framework in which to make these connections rests in the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification program. This non-profit organization saw a need to promote responsible and sustainable building practices, and, as in the organic food movement, a real need to standardize and qualify "green" claims. A Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification ensures clients that specific standards have been met in the areas of sustainable site planning, the safeguarding of water and water efficiency, energy efficiency and renewable energy, conservation of materials and resources and indoor environmental quality.

Many of these elements of LEED certification can be met through historic preservation. For example, materials and resource categories within LEED can be addressed by the fact that historic buildings are usually built with high quality materials from local sources. Most historic buildings also meet requirements for sustainable sites, as they are often centrally located. This not only makes the building accessible for public transportation, but also saves infrastructure and ancillary businesses from having to be re-built around a new, more remote alternate site. Preventing the cycle of tearing down and rebuilding naturally impacts the next two categories of water efficiency and energy/atmosphere because less materials are manufactured and less waste is pro-