



Green Guidelines:

**Promoting Environmental and Economic
Sustainability
Through Historic Preservation**

**For State Policy-Makers
2009**

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Promoting Environmental and Economic Sustainability Through Historic Preservation

The re-use of historic buildings, reinvestment in downtowns and villages, and protection of historic landscapes can -- and should -- be central ingredients in environmental and economic sustainabilityⁱ policies for the state of New Hampshire. This document is a guide for promoting public policies that direct investment toward those goals and strengthen our historic downtowns and town centers, agriculture and forestry, existing housing stock and cultural tourism.

Investment in energy reduction must consider the use and construction of buildings as buildings represent 59% of all energy use in the state.ⁱⁱ

While the marketplace often urges us to consider new as better, data from the U.S. Energy Information Agency shows that the **only buildings more energy efficient than buildings built before 1920 are those built after 2000.**ⁱⁱⁱ The majority of these pre-1920 buildings were constructed using repairable and often local materials and were sited and designed to minimize heating and cooling requirements. That doesn't mean that historic buildings are always as energy efficient as they might be; but old buildings can, and should, go green.

Historic preservation practice encourages us to look beyond operating energy to the total energy associated with a building's development. Energy is used to extract and create building materials, transport them, and assemble them into a building. Recent calculations indicate that **it takes about 35-50 years for an energy efficient new building to recover the embodied carbon expended in construction.**^{iv} Original materials, and existing buildings, contain embodied energy, an environmental asset destroyed by modern replacement.

We need "green" planning as much as green design. **Investment in older and historic villages and downtowns can reduce demands for transportation, new infrastructure and new building materials.**^v Compact development and use of existing infrastructure can also help protect important open space, farm land and forest land.

New Hampshire leaders are well positioned to address critical energy and economic issues. The Governor's Commission on Climate Change has engaged industry, government and other civic leaders on these topics. New Hampshire legislators advanced several regional, state and locally-focused energy-related initiatives last session. Private and public sector community development programs offer opportunities to direct existing resources to meet critical needs. Citizens are responding to changing energy and economic needs by forming local energy committees and setting new goals.

1. The State Must Lead by Example in Building-Related Investment and Management

State agencies generate important economic activity and major environmental impacts. State agencies must be required to improve sustainable practices in public works investments using principles of RSA 9-B.^{vi}

- Each agency's mission statement and policies should include the enhancement of the state's economic and environmental sustainability.
- Agencies should evaluate their rules to determine if they meet these goals, and explore and adopt alternatives as needed.
- Agencies should locate their offices in downtowns and village centers and utilize existing buildings wherever economically practical; and use appropriate advisors and comprehensive evaluations of costs when exploring options.
- In providing grants, technical assistance, education and other assistance, agencies should give priority to projects that strengthen sustainability goals.
- Agencies should support the N.H. Department of Transportation's efforts to preserve existing infrastructure and promote sustainable economic development and land use.
- The Energy Management Unit (suggested by the Governor's Commission on Climate Change) or similar entity must provide education and oversight of Capital Budget requests and other practices.

2. The State Has Opportunities to Advance Environmental and Economic Sustainability in the Promotion and Enhancement of Policies and Programs:

Encourage Investment in Downtowns and Town Centers

Investment in our downtowns and Main Streets can create new jobs, return vacant buildings to the tax base and help avoid costly sprawl. Many existing programs contribute to the environmental and economic sustainability of the state. A few examples:

The ERZ Business Tax Credit helps expand the commercial and industrial base, create new jobs, reduce sprawl and increase tax revenues. The Housing and Conservation Planning Program offers matching grants to municipalities to plan for growth and development in a manner that permits a balanced housing stock

The New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority supports housing and economic development activities that benefit low and moderate income citizens, and communities across the state, through state tax credits and the Community Development Block Grant Program. The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program serves as a powerful catalyst for saving community landmarks and promoting community development activity. RSA 79-E, a two-year old tax incentive, promotes strong local economies and smart, sustainable growth. A property owner who wants to substantially rehabilitate a downtown building may apply to the local governing body for a period of temporary property tax relief. The governing body may extend the temporary relief if additional housing and historic preservation goals are met.

- Support these programs, and explore adjustments to priorities or additional incentives to maximize their potential in meeting environmental and economic sustainability goals.
- Invest in pre-development so that construction projects succeed. This is especially important to ensure that state agencies are able to respond in a timely manner and municipalities and non-profit developers make the best use of federal economic stimulus monies.

Promote Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry

Historic preservation and land conservation are closely linked. Investing in downtowns can help protect open areas, preserve farmland and prevent forest fragmentation. Open space helps absorb carbon dioxide, and agriculture and forest industries offer sustainable economic opportunities. Even more can be done to harness these connections:

- Create a state food policy that offers incentives to local agriculture and reduces obstacles.
- Continue and enhance support of agri-tourism, NH's Own, and farmer's markets. The markets not only provide venues for retail sales, but can add to the vitality of downtowns and village centers.^{vii}
- Explore opportunities with transferable development rights, business development funds in exchange for term easements, expedited site review and other similar tools as incentives to development practices that meet economic and environmental sustainability goals.

Encourage the Use of Older Structures to Create Workforce Housing

Housing and business leaders report that New Hampshire's housing crisis threatens the state's economic growth, the stability of its communities and the health of its family structure. With the increasing gap between high and low wage earners in New Hampshire – and with more and more traditionally middle class jobs falling into the lower end of the wage scale – we have entered a period when increasing numbers of families are either unable to find housing they can afford or are paying unreasonable percentages of their incomes for housing. Businesses have experienced increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees because they are unable to find reasonably-priced housing.

Historic buildings often provide housing near the village center and promote a walking community while taking advantage of the water, sewer, roads and existing infrastructure. In addition to increased use and promotion of federal tax incentive programs for housing and the programs mentioned above:

- Advance the adoption of the Existing Building Code. The International Existing Building Code is tailored for old buildings and allows owners and developers more flexibility and lower project costs than the current codes meant for new construction. Civic leaders should join the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, the American Institute of Architects of New Hampshire and others in supporting the work of the N.H. Building Code Review Board and adopt these revitalization-friendly and safe codes through future state legislation.

- Provide training and incentives for local code officials to create reliable, safe and innovative approaches to achieve the re-use of old buildings, village centers and downtowns
- Adopt incentives to reward communities that provide a full spectrum of housing^{viii}

Align School Building Aid Policies with Sustainability Goals

New Hampshire should revise state public school siting and building aid policies to encourage the consideration of the renovation of existing schools and creation of high performance schools (renovation or new construction) that meet current educational standards and further the goals of RSA-9B and similar local and regional smart growth objectives.

- Current law and rules should be revised to place a new emphasis on renovation, comprehensive feasibility studies, meaningful coordination between affected municipal bodies, adequate maintenance and effective disposition processes. This will reinforce the current, strong trend toward renovation, take advantages of new opportunities for energy efficiency upgrades, and help alleviate conflicts in local school construction decision-making.
- For high performance schools, an additional funding bonus of 2 percent (resulting in a total bonus of 5 percent) may also entice more school districts into pursuing energy efficiency improvements that are based in major renovation projects or new construction.

Public investment in schools on the outside of town centers or neighborhoods can contribute to a greater reliance on personal automobiles and bus transportation and may exacerbate a dispersed pattern of growth. The reuse of older school buildings (as a school or for another use) allows the retention of the embodied energy in the existing structure.

Support the N.H. Department of Transportation's Efforts to Promote Safety and Efficiency while Meeting Civic and Sustainability Goals

A vision for transportation playing a critical role in preserving the state's unique character and quality of life, enhancing environmental quality and promoting sustainable economic development and land use was emphasized by a Community Advisory Committee, convened by the N.H. Charitable Foundation, as part of the N.H. Department of Transportation's most recent Long Range Transportation Plan.

- Expanded passenger and freight rail will reinforce compact development and help reduce carbon emissions.
- Support state and federal attention to preservation solutions for historic bridges to help stem the tide of loss of these important links to the transportation milestones of the past.

Wrought iron and steel truss bridges are a particularly endangered resource type. Over the past twenty years, New Hampshire has lost nearly half of these engineering landmarks. There are only 63 left, and only 39 are still in use.

Invest in Cultural and Heritage Tourism

The New Hampshire travel and tourism industry is the state's second largest industry, and traveler spending supports 67,000 direct full-time and part-time jobs. In FY2007, visitor spending topped \$4.35 billion and for every dollar spent in promoting tourism by the Division of Travel & Tourism, \$8.68 in revenues was returned to the state.^{ix} Nationally, the historic and cultural traveler spends an average of \$623 compared to \$457 for other travelers.^x A historic/cultural tourist travels to "experience the past through the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present."^{xi} This growing segment of the travel market is seeking authentic experiences offered through existing museums, historic sites, natural landscapes and art and craft of local people; these visitors appreciate and respect the distinctive places that we, as residents, also care about.

Policy-makers have set a course for preserving and enhancing its highly significant historic resources with the creation of a new Bureau of Historic Sites at the Department of Resources and Economic Development. Of the state's more than 13 designated historic properties, which include the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion, Robert Frost Farm, John Wingate Weeks Estate and Tip Top House at the summit of Mount Washington, three are listed National Historic Landmarks. The mission of the Bureau is to preserve, protect and promote all the historic resources under stewardship of the state including those resources yet to be identified within the State Park system.

- Continue to support the Bureau of State Historic Sites at the Department of Resources and Economic Development, and the exploration of new models for the sites' maintenance, management, interpretation and use.
- Expand existing offerings and develop new opportunities, particularly in economically challenged areas of the state through collaborative strategic marketing.

Older buildings and traditional landscapes not only link us to the state's history but also have an integral role in the everyday economy and workforce. Preservation investment and policies associated with existing building, downtowns and village centers, agriculture and forestry, housing and tourism are central features of policies that meet environmental and economic sustainability goals.

For more information:

www.nhpreservation.org, www.nhcdfa.org/web/drc_site/drc_overview.html
www.preservationnation.org/issues/sustainability/, www.nh.gov/nhdhr, www.nh.gov/oep, and
www.des.nh.gov for Governor's Commission on Climate Change

ⁱ Environmental Sustainability Historic preservation is an effective tool for valuing and protecting our environmental resources, including those that have already been expended as well as those not yet used. Because it encourages us to reuse sound older buildings instead of abandoning or demolishing them, and to direct development into already-developed areas instead of sprawling into open land, farm land and forest land, preservation is “recycling” on a grand scale. Economic Sustainability An economic system is not sustainable unless it respects the limits of the ecosystems on which it depends. By advocating wise stewardship of existing resources and judicious development and use of new ones, historic preservation advances this goal. Labor-intensive rehabilitation creates more jobs, and keeps more money circulating locally, than new construction. Revitalizing communities helps prevent expensive sprawl.

ⁱⁱ Jordan Institute, www.thejordaninstitute.org from 11/20/07 *Energy Facts* from N.H. Office of Energy and Management using 2004 data from U.S. Energy Information Agency.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Energy Information Agency. Consumption of Gross Energy Intensity for Sum of Major Fuels for Non Mall Buildings. 2003.

^{iv} Building and Social Housing Foundation and Empty Homes Agency, *New Tricks with Old Bricks*. www.emptyhomes.com/documents/publications/reports.

^v The costs of sprawl include higher per capita expenditures for municipal services and lost or stranded investment when school and municipal facilities are relocated to mere distant sites – all resulting in higher taxes. Other costs include loss of green space... as well as the undermining of existing town and city centers. *Achieving Smart Growth in NH*. Office of State Planning April 2003.

^{vi} From RSA 9B: A coordinated and comprehensive planning effort by state agencies on future development in the state is needed, which will not only improve our economy, but also encourages smart growth by locating development in appropriate growth areas and thus retaining as much open space land as possible for the long-term. Effective August 20, 2000.

^{vii} The agricultural industry is in the advantageous position of having both pent-up demand and the ability to charge premium prices. The marketing challenge is not to stimulate interest or promote value, but to increase awareness and access. Rumbletree Incorporated, *Marketing and Research Recommendations* for N.H. Department of Agriculture, 2003

^{viii} Give priority in the allocation of state benefits to communities who are addressing the housing challenge rather than deferring it for the next generation to address.

^{ix} L.E. Goss. N.H. Fiscal Year 2007 Tourism Satellite Account, Institute of N.H. Studies.

^x Travel Industry Association.

^{xi} Cheryl M. Hargrove. “Heritage Tourism, *CRM* (2002): 10.

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