

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

THE WHY AND HOW OF BUILDING REUSE

Older buildings and neighborhoods are precious civic assets—as essential to cities as parks, schools, or public transit. They provide architectural character, sustain diversity, contribute to dense and walkable communities, and fuel local economies. Reusing older buildings advances community resilience and curbs climate change by reducing carbon emissions and material waste. **Yet, millions of older buildings across the United States lie vacant and underused.** To fully realize their potential, cities need new tools that remove barriers to reusing older buildings and discourage demolition.

TOP STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE BUILDING REUSE

Cities across the country are using innovative approaches to make building reuse easier and more likely. Released in October 2017, the *Untapped Potential* report draws on a partnership between the Preservation Green Lab and Urban Land Institute designed to understand the barriers to building reuse nationally. The report outlines eight top-line approaches to make cities more reuse friendly, detailed below.



Leverage data and mapping tools to understand reuse opportunities.

Knowing a city's built assets is the first step to being able to target incentives, programs, and infill development.



Retain and strengthen existing incentives for building reuse.

Support ongoing advocacy for the federal historic tax credit and new and strengthened state historic tax credits.



Eliminate, reduce, or recalibrate parking requirements.

Fewer parking requirements incentivizes investment in older buildings. Shared parking in nearby locations can also fill this need.



Update zoning codes to meet 21st-century needs.

Promote new uses, greater diversity of uses, accessory dwelling units, and other context-sensitive zoning changes to provide more opportunities for reuse and infill.



Adopt a comprehensive adaptive reuse program.

Adaptive reuse ordinances bring together incentives along with flexibility in building and zoning codes, removing unnecessary barriers to reuse projects.



Remove barriers that prevent change of use in existing buildings.

Establishing provisions within the zoning code for appropriate and compatible “sister uses” can ease the transition to new uses by reducing red tape.



Cultivate new sources of public and private capital for smaller projects or projects in weaker markets.

Leverage new and existing funds to cover gap financing, pre-development costs, and other expenses.



Develop a “solutions database” for overcoming building code challenges.

Daylighting creative solutions, successful projects, and paths to navigate complex redevelopment problems can be invaluable to small-scale infill and adaptive reuse projects.

Let's work to foster more sustainable and inclusive cities by removing the barriers to building reuse. More information on the *Untapped Potential* report, as well as additional resources and studies on the contributions of existing buildings, can be found at savingplaces.org/greenlab.



National Trust for Historic Preservation
Preservation Green Lab

