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At its most basic, historic preservation is about keeping old places alive, in active use, and relevant to the needs of communities today. As cities across America experience a remarkable renaissance, and more and more young, diverse families choose to live, work, and play in historic neighborhoods, the promise and potential of using our older and historic buildings to revitalize our cities is stronger than ever.

This urban resurgence is a national phenomenon, boosting cities from Cleveland to Buffalo and Portland to Pittsburgh. Experts offer a range of theories on what is driving the return to the city—from the impact of the recent housing crisis to a desire to be socially engaged, live near work, and reduce automobile use. But there's also more to it. Time and again, when asked why they moved to the city, people talk about the desire to live somewhere distinctive, to be some place rather than no place. Often these distinguishing urban landmarks are exciting neighborhoods—Miami boasts its Art Deco district, New Orleans the French Quarter. Sometimes, as in the case of Baltimore's historic rowhouses, the most distinguishing feature is the urban fabric itself