“Best practices” research, sometimes known as “benchmarking,” is a common component of many planning projects. Learning from other places and comparing the performance of various programs is invaluable because it allows us to build upon our peers’ successes, rather than reinvent the wheel. The four U.S. cities profiled in this chapter of the HPP are not intended to approximate Anchorage in every way, but certain parallels can be drawn between Anchorage and certain aspects of each of these cities. Some were selected because they are similar to Anchorage in size, organization, or climate, while others were selected because they exhibit political similarities or contain like resource types. Still others are national leaders in preservation, and are simply inspiring. The ideas and programs presented in the case study section were carefully chosen to collectively represent the brightest ideas and best neighborhood-focused preservation programs from across the country that are most relevant to Anchorage.

Information about how other cities have tackled the issues facing Anchorage is also included throughout this document, so please pay special attention to the sidebars and notes in the HPP.
Case Study #1: Juneau, Alaska

Juneau’s built environment dates back to its humble beginnings as a mining town in the 1880s, and it has continued to flourish as the capital of Alaska. Heritage tourism is a huge component of the city’s local economy, and therefore historic preservation has been a key goal of the city for many years. The City/Borough of Juneau became a Certified Local Government in 1988, and the creation of local historic districts and local landmarks has allowed Juneau to protect its historic resources.

Juneau was selected as a case study because it is one of the few other cities in Alaska with an active historic preservation program, even though its resources are generally older than Anchorage’s resources. Juneau has had success in its Downtown Historic District with design guidelines that clarify expectations, streamline the design review process, and improve economic viability—all things Anchorage is concerned about, too—and thus it a good lesson for Anchorage.

Online Inventory

Juneau’s Historic Sites & Structures Inventory was developed as a joint effort between the City/Borough of Juneau and the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, using a variety of grant funding. The project was intended to be a “one-stop shop” for researchers and the public, collecting information and materials that were previously scattered throughout various City/Borough departments. The inventory is available online, and is searchable by a variety of fields (architectural style, address, architect, etc.). Historic photographs have been provided where possible, and it is easy to learn about the properties that have been documented. The inventory can be accessed at: [http://www.juneau.org/cddftp/HSD/](http://www.juneau.org/cddftp/HSD/).
Downtown Historic District

The Juneau Downtown Historic District is the city’s historic core, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and as a local historic district. The district has been protected in some capacity since the 1980s, but a new set of design guidelines was prepared in 2009 to clarify expectations, streamline the design review process, and improve economic viability. Earlier sets of design standards focused exclusively on the late Victorian style, though in 2009 guidelines were expanded to cover four styles: late Victorian, early Twentieth Century Commercial, Art Moderne, and Art Deco.

Compliance with the design standards is mandatory for all properties within the historic district. Even alterations that may seem minor, such as storefront improvements, have the potential to greatly affect a building’s integrity, and therefore must be reviewed.

Further Reading About the Juneau Downtown Historic District:


Case Study #2: Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City has been working to build a high-quality historic preservation program, with a focus on building new preservation tools and establishing a consistent vision and philosophy. Salt Lake City has been involved in preservation since the 1970s—despite being a relatively young city—but recently completed a comprehensive preservation plan (April 2010) with extensive community participation during the planning process. Like Anchorage, Salt Lake City uses a neighborhood-based Community Council system.

Salt Lake City was selected because like Anchorage, it is a relatively young city in the American West. Salt Lake City is smaller than Anchorage—only 189,899 people compared to Anchorage’s 295,570—but like Anchorage, it is organized using a neighborhood-based Community Council system: each council provides community input and information to City departments on a variety of topics and issues.

Financial Incentives

Salt Lake City takes advantage of a number of historic preservation incentives, including a variety of low-interest loans and tax exemptions. These resources are helpfully collected on the website of the Utah Heritage Foundation (a statewide preservation advocacy nonprofit organization): http://www.utahheritagefoundation.com/preservation-resources/financial-resources

Utah Statewide Incentives

- **State Tax Credit:** The Utah State Historic Preservation Office offers a 20% state tax credit program for rehabilitation of qualified residential properties. http://history.utah.gov/historic_buildings/financial_assistance/state_tax_credit.html
- **Revolving Loan Fund:** The Utah Heritage Foundation offers low-interest loans to restore and rehabilitate significant historical properties throughout the state. http://www.utahheritagefoundation.com/preservation-resources/low-interest-loans
Salt Lake City Housing & Neighborhood Development

- **Home Repair Program**: To preserve and rehabilitate existing homes, loans are available for home repair, up to $20,000, with interest rate between 0% and current bank rates. Minimum payment loans and deferred payment are offered. [http://www.slcclassic.com/ced/hand/pages/housing.htm](http://www.slcclassic.com/ced/hand/pages/housing.htm)

- **First-Time Home Buyers Program**: To improve affordability of existing housing stock, first-time home buyers may qualify for interest rates as low as 3% fixed for 30 years.

Salt Lake City Revolving Loan Fund

- **Small Business Building Renovation Loan**: Loans up to $50,000 over 10 years are available for a business to improve and renovate a current building. Interest rate is fixed; collateral minimum 25% of loan amount; cash requirement 10% cash or equivalent injection. [http://www.slcclassic.com/ED/rlf.htm](http://www.slcclassic.com/ED/rlf.htm)

- **Storefront Micro-Loans**: Commercial property owners can receive up to $5,000 over 3 years for signage and storefront enhancements. Interest rate is fixed; no collateral or cash requirement.

Salt Lake City Redevelopment Agency Programs

- **Building Renovation Loans**: Building owners and developers can receive funding for up to 50% of building renovation costs, including restoring the façade of the building to its original appearance. [http://www.slcrda.com/programs/programs.htm](http://www.slcrda.com/programs/programs.htm)

- **High-Performance Building Renovation Loans**: Property owners or developers can receive financing for 50% of building renovation costs at 0% interest for buildings that achieve a LEED certification level or an Energy Star rating.
### Design Review Process

Prior to obtaining a building permit, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required for all exterior work (except painting and minor repair) in locally designated historic districts or individual properties listed on the Salt Lake City Register of Cultural Resources. The city’s historic preservation ordinance includes clear standards for considering approval of Certificate of Appropriateness applications.

To streamline the process for applicants and staff, three levels of review are conducted. Administrative Review is staff-level review of smaller projects, such as window replacement, garages, and small additions (typically reviewed within one to two weeks, or approved at the counter). The Architectural Subcommittee is a small group of Historic Landmark Commission members that provides technical assistance to property owners or assists staff with complicated administrative approvals (the committee meets as needed). The full Historic Landmark Commission reviews demolitions, infill construction, and major alterations (meeting once each month). Although demolition of significant buildings is generally prohibited, the review process includes an Economic Hardship provision as an exception to this rule: a Determination of Economic Hardship takes into account current level of economic return on the property, marketability for sale or lease, infeasibility of alternative uses, and availability of financial incentives.

### Further Reading About Salt Lake City’s Design Review Process:

Zoning Tools

As recommended by the city’s 2010 Historic Preservation Plan, Salt Lake City has been working on revisions to its zoning code to include a wider range of preservation zoning tools. New tools such as “character conservation districts” would provide communities with flexibility in how to protect their neighborhoods’ character. These conservation districts are voluntary—more than 50% of residents have to “opt-in”—and design review can be as strict or as lenient as the community wants. This grassroots approach is perfect for areas that may not want or do not qualify for local designation, yet have character worthy of protection.

Combined with the existing overlay zoning classifications for historic preservation, the city will soon offer four types of zoning tools that create a hierarchy of protections and corresponding restrictions. This range of tools, listed in increasing level of local regulation, consists of base zoning, neighborhood-based zoning, conservation district, and local historic district.

Further Reading About Salt Lake City’s Zoning Tools:


In addition to traditional historic districts, Salt Lake City has been working on providing new preservation zoning tools such as “character conservation districts.”
In a city as vast as Los Angeles, it is not surprising that neighborhood-based planning is an essential component of the city's historic preservation activities. Although Los Angeles enacted a Cultural Heritage Ordinance in 1962, until recently it did not have all the elements of a comprehensive municipal historic preservation program. In the last decade, the city has been known for its ambitious and innovative historic preservation planning efforts, including SurveyLA, a comprehensive survey project to identify significant historic resources throughout Los Angeles’ 880,000 parcels. The city’s Office of Historic Resources was formed in 2004, and now has a staff of six planners to serve dozens of Los Angeles neighborhoods, each large enough to be small cities in their own right.

Los Angeles was selected as a case study because it shares Anchorage’s mid-century modern resources, automobile-oriented development patterns, and strong neighborhood focus. Los Angeles’ population is clearly at a different scale than Anchorage’s, but it was not profiled here because of its size. Residents of the Four Original Neighborhoods are passionate about their neighborhoods, and want the HPP and future preservation efforts to be tailored to their specific area. Los Angeles is a leader in neighborhood-based preservation zoning policy, and their HPO system is summarized here because it allows the same type of flexibility at the neighborhood level desired in Anchorage. The Los Angeles Conservancy was highlighted here because it is a nationally recognized preservation nonprofit organization that could inspire preservation groups in Anchorage.

Overlay Zones

Historic preservation in Los Angeles occurs at the neighborhood level, and the city’s Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs) structure is one of the nation’s leading examples of preservation zoning policy. There are currently 29 HPOZs, each of which has its own HPOZ Review Board to conduct design review within the district and report to the City Planning Department. In addition, 11 proposed HPOZs are under consideration by the Los Angeles City Council.

According to the Office of Historic Resources’ website: “Each HPOZ Board consists of five members, at least three of whom must be renters or owners of property within an HPOZ. All members should have knowledge of and interest in the culture, structures, sites, history and architecture of the HPOZ
area, and if possible, experience in historic preservation. [...] The Board is an advisory body to the City Planning Department. The Director of Planning has the authority to issue determinations, building permit sign-offs, and Certificates of Appropriateness.”

At the time an HPOZ is adopted by the City Council, the Department of City Planning will work with the HPOZ Review Board to create a “Preservation Plan,” which includes a list of contributing properties and a set of design guidelines to be used for review of Certificate of Appropriateness applications. When HPOZ neighborhoods do not yet have an adopted Preservation Plan, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are used as the benchmark for review of projects.

By using a neighborhood-based model for design review within HPOZs, the Cultural Heritage Commission—analogous to Anchorage’s Historic Resources Commission—is only involved in reviewing alterations to individual local landmarks.

**Further Reading About Los Angeles’ HPOZs:**


**Adaptive Reuse Ordinance**

One of the most powerful incentives in Los Angeles’ toolbox is the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, adopted in 1999 to facilitate conversion of commercial buildings into new uses, such as apartments, condominiums, live/work lofts, retail, and hotels. The ordinance was originally focused on decaying Downtown Los Angeles, but was expanded to other neighborhoods in 2003 after it was successfully implemented in Downtown.
The Adaptive Reuse Ordinance helps to streamline the approval process, resulting in substantial time- and cost-savings for developers. The program relaxes parking, density, and other typical zoning requirements, and also provides flexibility in the permitting process. The result has been the creation of several thousand new housing units, revitalization of distressed neighborhoods, and retention of significant buildings, thus illustrating the important link between historic preservation and economic development.

**Further Reading About Los Angeles’ Adaptive Reuse Ordinance:**


**Nonprofit Partners**

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the local preservation advocacy nonprofit organization, and is a great partner for the Office of Historic Resources. The Conservancy hosts tours and events; honors local achievements through its annual preservation awards; sponsors youth and other educational programs; and serves as a contact for other community groups. The Conservancy also actively advocates for threatened historic buildings, especially Los Angeles’ famous theaters and Mid-Century Modern resources. Furthermore, the Conservancy website provides a wealth of information, including helpful links and resources about how to research one’s own property, how to contact tradesfolk and contractors who specialize in traditional building, or which incentives are available to finance one’s preservation project.

**Further Reading About the L.A. Conservancy:**

Case Study #4: San Antonio, Texas

San Antonio—home of the Alamo—has built a comprehensive, robust preservation program with a focus on community outreach and education. The City of San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation includes one dedicated historic preservation officer, as well as 10 planners who support various aspects of the program. In 2009, San Antonio prepared a Strategic Historic Preservation Plan, using an extensive public planning process to help guide the long-term vision for the program.

San Antonio was selected as a case study because of the comprehensive nature of its preservation program, as well as the political and economic similarities shared by Texas and Alaska. Although San Antonio is a much larger, denser city than Anchorage, it was not profiled here because of its size. Instead, San Antonio’s success in implementing their recent historic preservation plan through regular reporting and extensive public education campaigns parallels the implementation plan for the HPP.

**Implementation & Benchmarking**

San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation has been working to implement its Strategic Historic Preservation Plan since its adoption in August 2009. To this end, the city has prepared an annual report each year that summarizes the accomplishments in each of the six recommendation categories: Planning, Zoning, Economic Development, Historic Resources, Incentives, and Education and Advocacy. In the first year alone, nearly 20 achievements undertaken by public-private partnerships were highlighted in the annual report. A detailed matrix is also updated annually to track each implementation strategy.

**Further Reading About the San Antonio Strategic Historic Preservation Plan:**


**Education & Outreach**

The City of San Antonio has been dedicated to raising awareness about historic preservation. The city’s user-friendly website includes links to all these events and programs, making it easy for the public to learn about preservation.
- **A Historic Plaque Program** visually identifies significant buildings in the city, which currently has 27 local historic districts and more than 2,000 individual local landmarks.

- Since 2010, the Office of Historic Preservation has sponsored **Historic Preservation Television (HPTV)**, a monthly 30-minute segment on the city’s public access channel. Past topics include African-American Structures in San Antonio, San Antonio’s Historic Districts, Historic Farms and Ranches, Design Guidelines, and more.

- A recent public awareness and fundraising campaign called “**Power of Preservation**” included events, flyers, and press releases; the Office of Historic Preservation also celebrates and promotes **National Preservation Month** every May.

- **Other educational tools** include a series of walking tours; a Historic Conservation Series on Texas Public Radio; a “River Walk Tour” smartphone app; and guides to conducting historic house research.

- Brochures about historic preservation regulations and processes are available online, and Office of Historic Preservation staff are available to provide **technical assistance** to property owners and developers.

**Further Reading About San Antonio’s Education & Outreach Efforts:**


Other Cities

Little Rock, Arkansas

Little Rock was selected as an additional case study because of its size, although it is a bit smaller than Anchorage—only 195,314 people compared to Anchorage’s 295,570. The following highlights of Little Rock’s preservation program are especially relevant to Anchorage:

- The Little Rock Historic Preservation Plan was completed in 2009, and is quite comprehensive. Like Anchorage, recognition of diverse cultural history was a key goal: for example, Central High School is a National Historic Landmark for the role it played in desegregation of education in the U.S. [http://www.littlerock.org/userfiles/editor/docs/planning/hdc/pres_plan_part_1_rev.pdf](http://www.littlerock.org/userfiles/editor/docs/planning/hdc/pres_plan_part_1_rev.pdf).

- Capital Zoning District Commission: This commission was formed in the 1970s to protect the special character of the neighborhoods surrounding the State Capitol and Governor’s Mansion. It acts as a special planning and historic preservation commission for this area, and conducts review of work in the district independently of the citywide Historic District Commission. This could be a model for regulating preservation in the Four Original Neighborhoods. [http://czdc.arkansas.gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://czdc.arkansas.gov/Pages/default.aspx).

- Financial incentives are a key component of preservation in Little Rock. Tax credits, façade easements, rehabilitation grants and loans, housing affordability programs, and overlay zoning all help to balance preservation and economic development in Little Rock. All these concepts could apply in Anchorage, too. [http://www.littlerock.org/citydepartments/planninganddevelopment/boardsandcommissions/historicdistrictcomm/default.aspx](http://www.littlerock.org/citydepartments/planninganddevelopment/boardsandcommissions/historicdistrictcomm/default.aspx).

- The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program conducted a two-year study about the effects of historic preservation on the Arkansas economy, and the results are directly applicable to Anchorage. Issues such as heritage tourism, job creation, tax credits, grant programs, and historic property valuation are all addressed, and were proved to be beneficial to the state. [http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/economic-benefits/](http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/economic-benefits/).
A brochure entitled "A Profitable Past: The Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Arkansas" highlights the results of a two-year statewide study about the positive economic effects of historic preservation activities.
The results of a two-year study by the Center for Urban Policy Research at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey find that historic preservation has a tremendous impact on Arkansas’s economy.

The study looked into the economic impact of the federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, the anticipated effect of a proposed state tax credit, heritage tourism, rehabilitation of historic properties, state historic preservation grants and the Main Street Arkansas program. All of the figures cited are in 2006 dollars.

The federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit creates a strong incentive to invest in historic properties.

The Federal HRTC investment:
- Leveraged $54.3 million of historic rehabilitation in Arkansas from 2000 to 2006.
- Supported 767 Arkansas jobs from 2000 to 2006.
- Added $22.4 million to the income of Arkansas families from 2000 to 2006.
- Generated $1.1 million in state and local tax revenue from 2000 to 2006.

The proposal for a 25-percent Arkansas state historic rehabilitation tax credit would attract strong investment in Arkansas’s economy.
- One Arkansas job would be supported for every $12,000-$12,500 of state investment in the proposed tax credit.
- Each $1 of state investment in the proposed tax credit would return $2.19-$2.22 in income to Arkansas families.
- Each $1 of state investment in the proposed tax credit would return 17.7-18.5 cents in state and local taxes, partially offsetting the program’s short-term cost to state revenue.

Heritage tourists are those tourists who visit a site of historical or cultural value.

Heritage tourists:
- Comprise about 16 percent of all Arkansas tourists.
- Spend about 30 percent more than the average tourist.
- Are more likely to come from out of state, adding new dollars to Arkansas’s economy.

Heritage tourism:
- Generates $890.6 million in Arkansas each year.
- Supports 21,552 Arkansas jobs yearly.
- Adds $318.8 million to the yearly income of Arkansas families.
- Generates $73.8 million in state and local tax revenue each year.

Arkansans spend $74.5 million each year rehabilitating historic properties — those properties that are listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places or the Arkansas Register of Historic Places.

Historic rehabilitation:
- Supports 1,323 Arkansas jobs yearly.
- Adds $40.9 million to the yearly income of Arkansas families.
- Generates $3.3 million in state and local tax revenue each year.
- Accounts for about 6 percent of all building rehabilitation in Arkansas.

The state of Arkansas offers several grant programs for historic rehabilitation.
- These include grants from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council and the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program’s Historic Preservation Restoration Grants, County Courthouse Restoration Grants, and Main Street Model Business Grants, many of which are funded through the Real Estate Transfer Tax.
Cincinnati, Ohio

Cincinnati was selected as an additional case study because of its size. As estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau in July 2011, Anchorage is the 65th biggest city by population, Cincinnati is 64th—nearly the same size. The following highlights of Cincinnati’s preservation program are especially relevant to Anchorage:

- Like Anchorage, Cincinnati is organized using a Community Council system.


- “Urban Conservator” position: the city’s program is headed by the urban conservator, a person whose qualifications must include experience in private development (architect, planner, preservation consultant, builder or developer—not just an academic). Two regular planners are also assigned to the preservation team. [http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/planning/historic-conservation/urban-conservator/](http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/planning/historic-conservation/urban-conservator/).

- Cincinnati Modernism: although it is not known for its modern resources, Cincinnati’s local nonprofit organizations have recognized resources from the recent past and are trying to raise public awareness about this important period of design. [http://www.cf3.org/](http://www.cf3.org/) & [http://cincinnatipreservation.org/advocacy/modernism/](http://cincinnatipreservation.org/advocacy/modernism/).
Additional cities that could be used as case studies and are referenced throughout the HPP include: