

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours and 15 minutes

3 Questions

Question 1

Suggested reading and writing time—55 minutes

It is suggested that you spend 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and 40 minutes writing your response.

Note: You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.

(This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Historic preservation laws are intended to protect buildings deemed to be of historic, cultural, or architectural value. The laws affect both government buildings and private property, putting constraints on how and to what extent the structures can be altered, renovated, or replaced. Proponents of these laws claim they are necessary for the preservation of history and culture and the architectural integrity of a neighborhood. Opponents of the laws argue that such laws prevent progress and negatively impact real estate development, building renovation, and building design.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the value, if any, of laws designed to preserve buildings deemed to be of historic importance.

Source A (National Park Service Web site)

Source B (Merlino book)

Source C (Appelbaum opinion article)

Source D (Webb graph)

Source E (Martin article)

Source F (Rosen cartoon)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Source A

“National Historic Preservation Act.” *National Park Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2 Dec. 2018, [nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/national-historic-preservation-act.htm](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/national-historic-preservation-act.htm).

The following is excerpted from a Web site maintained by the United States National Park Service.

After World War II, the United States seemed poised at the edge of a limitless future, and its vision of progress was characterized by the sleek and the new. Urban renewal was seen as a way to clear out the slums, get rid of “obsolete” buildings, make space for an exploding population, and accommodate the burgeoning car culture. Wide swaths were demolished: entire blocks, neighborhoods, business districts, all razed to make way for the new. By the 1960s, urban renewal had altered the face of the nation’s cities.

But out of this wholesale erasure of the old grew the most important law governing how we treat those places that define our past: the National Historic Preservation Act. It was the first national policy governing preservation and it would shape the fate of many of our historic and cultural sites over the next half-century. There had been earlier measures to foster preservation—the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Historic Sites Act of 1935—but none were as sweeping or as influential as the National Historic Preservation Act.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson convened a special committee on historic preservation. The committee studied the dismal situation, then delivered a report to Congress. Their report, called *With Heritage So Rich*, became a rallying cry for the preservation movement. Up until that time, the National Park Service’s Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) had documented 12,000 places in the United States. By 1966, half of them had either been destroyed or damaged beyond repair. . . .

Before the year was out, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act. It was the most comprehensive preservation law the nation had ever known. The act established permanent institutions and created a clearly defined process for historic preservation in the United States.

Historic structures that would be affected by federal projects—or by work that was federally funded—now had to be documented to standards issued by the Secretary of the Interior. The law required individual states to take on much more responsibility for historic sites in their jurisdictions. Each state would now have its own historic preservation office and was required to complete an inventory of important sites. The law also created the President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the National Register of Historic Places, an official list not only of individual buildings and structures, but also of districts, objects, and archeological sites that are important due to their connection with the past. . . .

With the passage of the act, preservation in the United States became formalized and professionalized. The National Historic Preservation Act was tied to a growing awareness of the past and of community identity. Many communities realized that there was an unexpected economic force behind preservation. The act helped foster heritage tourism, attracting visitors who wanted to experience the past in ways that no book or documentary could match. The distinctive character of old architecture and historic districts became a powerful draw for many Americans, and antidote to anonymous suburbs and strip malls.

Source B

Merlino, Kathryn Rogers. *Building Reuse: Sustainability, Preservation, and the Value of Design*. University of Washington Press, 2018.

The following is excerpted from a book advocating for more reuse of existing buildings.

In the United States, the recognition of value in buildings began with the identification and preservation of historical structures that had played an important part of the story of creating our nation. Historic designation usually takes into consideration national standards of significance set within specific boundaries: to be designated, a building must be proven to be associated with an important moment in local or national history, or with a historical individual or group, or must represent an exceptional architectural style or tradition. Of course, the question of what should be considered “significant” historical and cultural value in a building is often hotly debated by owners, historians, politicians, community groups, and other interested parties. When the terms of significance can’t be established or agreed upon, it becomes practically impossible to “officially” declare something historic—and suddenly, the building lacks “value.” For this reason, basing preservation decisions solely on whether a building has been designated as “historic” significantly limits the way we value and preserve existing buildings. In effect, the word *historic* saves them, but *old* or *existing* does not, and anyone who wants to demolish a building can simply argue that the building lacks historical significance. Considering that “nonhistoric” buildings comprise the vast majority of our existing building stock, we need to broaden our definition of *value* if we are to maintain cultural and environmental sustainability.

Attaching value to buildings exclusively for their architectural, cultural, or historic significance is problematic in three ways. First, only buildings with the highest historic status are considered valuable enough to be protected from demolition, but this type of building represents only a small percentage of designated buildings. As a result, the majority of historic designations are primarily honorific; and while they provide financial incentives for maintaining a building’s character and may give it greater stature and recognition, they do not protect it from demolition. Second, the historic designation process is piecemeal and irregular—and therefore complicated, time-consuming, and discouraging. The result is that only a small fraction of eligible buildings are even nominated, and those that win registry constitute a tiny portion of the buildings that—by the same standards—would qualify. Finally, attaching value to buildings exclusively because of their notarized historical significance ignores the fact that all buildings inherently hold value as *environmental* artifacts. They are repositories of extracted and manufactured materials and represent expended energy and carbon emissions; and as such, they hold great value as environmental resources. Consequently, while we rigorously recycle our paper, glass, and metal, we do not apply this ethic to our largest manufactured artifacts, our buildings. Regarding our existing building stock as an environmental resource is essential to advancing any agenda of sustainability.

The opportunities that older buildings offer are enormous. Older buildings not only have worth as resources of materials but also can be retrofitted with energy-efficient technologies for high performance. In fact, some older buildings already have a head start. Studies show that many older buildings already perform as well as or better than new buildings by many measures.

Source C

Appelbaum, Binyamin. “When Historic Preservation Hurts Cities.” *The New York Times*, 26 Jan. 2020, [nytimes.com/2020/01/26/opinion/historic-preservation-solar-panels.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/26/opinion/historic-preservation-solar-panels.html).

The following is excerpted from an opinion article published in a national newspaper.

I live in a historic neighborhood in the heart of Washington, D.C. It’s not historic in the sense that anything especially important happened here—certainly not in the modest rowhouses that make up the bulk of the neighborhood. What “historic” means, here and in cities across the country, is that this is a neighborhood where buildings are not supposed to change.

The law says window frames on Capitol Hill must be wooden, or something that looks very much like wood. If a front door has two parts and opens down the middle, it cannot be replaced by a single door that swings open from the side. If the house was built two stories tall, it must remain two stories tall—unless the addition can’t be seen from the street.

Humans don’t like change, so it’s not surprising that historic preservation laws have become quite popular. There are now more than 2,300 local historic districts across the United States, and I know many people who would like to have their own neighborhood frozen in time.

But historic preservation comes at a cost: It obstructs change for the better. And while that price is generally invisible, it is now on public display because of the city’s efforts to prevent Washington homeowners in historic neighborhoods from installing visible rooftop solar panels. . .

“I applaud your greenness, and your desire to save the planet . . .” Chris Landis, an architect who sat on one of the boards that pass judgment on proposed changes to Washington homes, told a homeowner in October who had the temerity to request permission to install 12 front-facing solar panels on his own roof. “But I just have this vision of a row of houses with solar panels on the front of them and it just—it upsets me, as somebody who’s supposed to protect the architectural fabric of a neighborhood.”

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Source D

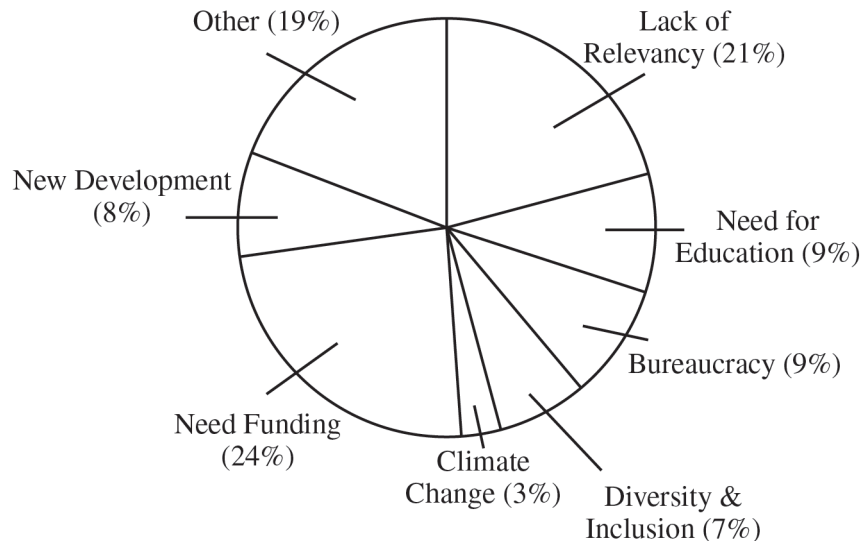
Webb, Amy. “Building Relevance: What Are the Top Challenges Facing Preservation?”
National Trust for Historic Preservation: Preservation Leadership Forum, 8 Oct. 2020,
 forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/amy-webb1/2020/10/08/survey-top-challenges-facing-
 preservation.

The following is based on a graph from a survey on preservation, conducted by a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving historic structures. The graph shows historic preservation professionals’ responses to the question “What are the top challenges to preserving historic places?”

While survey respondents identified a broad range of issues, the top seven preservation challenges as of the fall of 2019 . . . included:

1. Need for funding
2. Need to communicate the relevancy of preservation
3. Pressures from new development
4. Bureaucratic [complicated administrative] nature of some preservation processes
5. Need to educate the next generation of preservationists, particularly in the preservation trades
6. Lack of diversity in the preservation movement
7. Risks posed by climate change

WHAT ARE THE TOP CHALLENGES TO PRESERVING HISTORIC PLACES?



Source E

Martin, Shayla. “Can a Grassroots Movement Save Harlem’s Culturally Rich Buildings? We Talked to the Women Preserving the Neighborhood’s History.” *Veranda*, 19 Aug. 2021, veranda.com/home-decorators/a37189748/preservation-of-harlem/.

The following is excerpted from an article published in a magazine focused on home design.

Valerie Jo Bradley is one of the cofounders of Save Harlem Now!, a nonprofit advocacy group that formed to preserve buildings and landscapes that contain important African American history from the early 20th century. “We realized we’ve got to be organized and proactive to deal with the fact that only 3.7 percent of Harlem’s buildings are landmarked compared to 66 percent of Greenwich Village and 50 percent of the Upper West and Upper East sides.”

Since its establishment in 2015, the group has worked with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate key buildings and historic districts for legal protection (among them, the rowhouse-rich area of West 130th and 132nd streets between Lenox Avenue and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd.; the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library, frequented by [Langston] Hughes and fellow writer James Baldwin, is also on their list). This year, Save Harlem Now! received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund to bolster their preservation efforts.

And not a moment too soon. Since the early aughts,¹ development in Harlem has ramped up, replacing endemic boutiques, coffee shops, grocery stores, and even the architectural vernacular itself with mirrors of other urban landscapes.

“[Bradley] sees historic district designation as a way to slow down development trends, or at least to ensure that the physical history and cultural legacy is retained in Harlem, and I agree with her,” says Brent Leggs, executive director of the Action Fund. “Preservation is people-centered. Although we’re using old things—old buildings, old stories—it’s really about leveraging the power of place to have a positive impact on people’s lives right now in the present moment,” Leggs adds. “A lot of our work examines the different tools that can be used to mitigate both racial and cultural displacement. And the preservation efforts happening now in Harlem really highlight the ways that the culture is retained.”

Of course, preservation alone will not stave off gentrification,² but it’s an essential component, adds Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation and co-chair of the National Advisory Council of the Action Fund. “Without ensuring that people have access to critical resources like affordable housing and good jobs in their communities, we won’t be able [to] preserve the essence of what makes places like Harlem so special: its residents.”

Under Walker’s leadership, the Ford Foundation’s America’s Cultural Treasures Initiative has made unprecedented investments in significant arts centers in Harlem, including the Apollo Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. “We want these anchors of our community—and the people who live there—to remain resilient and not get swept away in the tidal wave of gentrification Harlem is experiencing,” he says. Also on Walker’s list: keeping larger cultural institutions rooted in Harlem, places like

the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, one of the leading worldwide archives for information on people of African descent, and Mother AME Zion Church, the oldest African American church in New York City.

¹ early 2000s

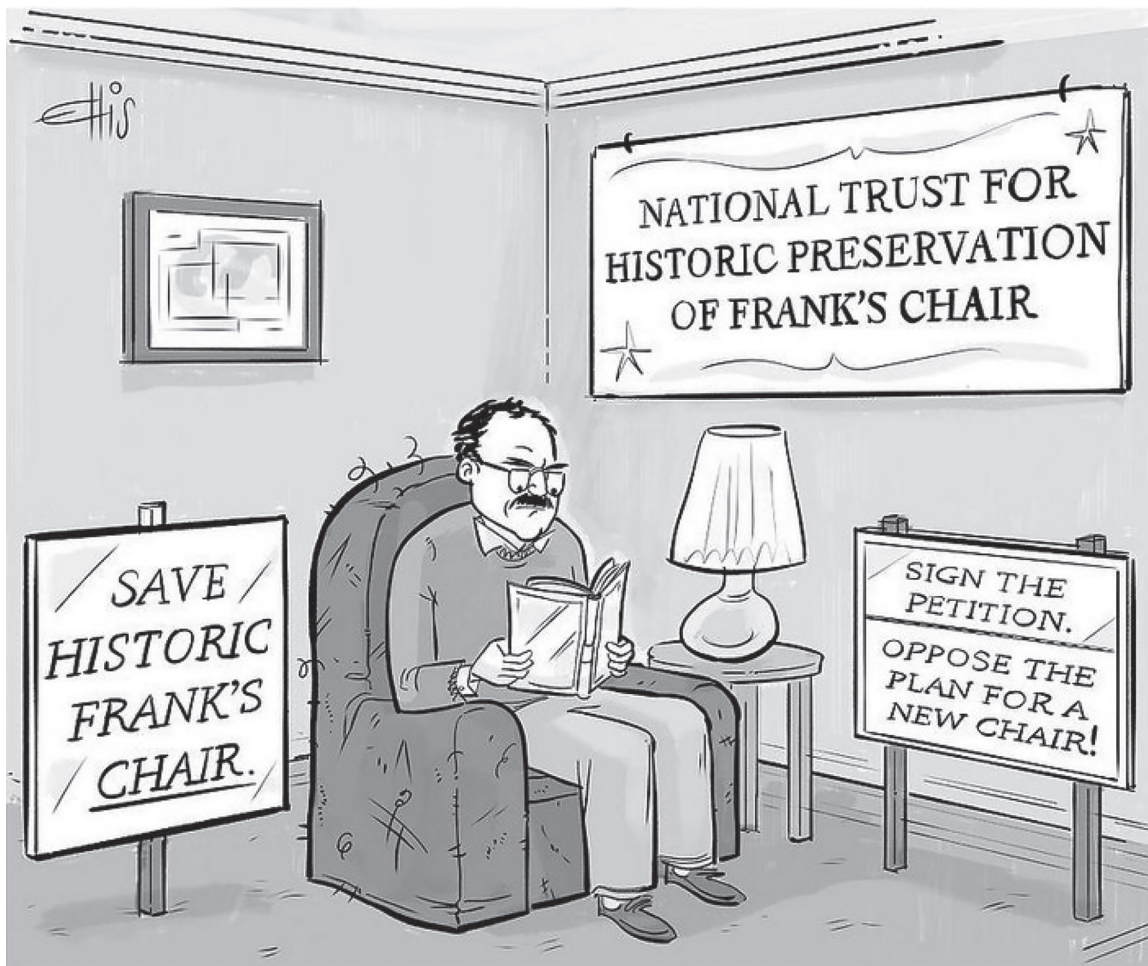
² process in which a neighborhood or area is changed or renovated through the influx of middle-class residents and businesses, often displacing the original residents of the area

by Shayla Martin, *Veranda*, Hearst Magazine Media, Inc.

Source F

Rosen, Ellis. "National Trust for Historic Preservation of Frank's Chair." *New Yorker Collection*, 3 Jan. 2022, condenaststore.com/featured/national-trust-for-historic-preservation-of-franks-chair-ellis-rosen.html.

The following is a cartoon from the collection of a weekly magazine of journalism and culture.



Ellis Rosen
The New Yorker Collection
The Cartoon Bank; © Condé Nast

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.