

SAVANNAH DECLARATION

ON THE HISTORIC CENTER AND THE NEXT CITY



SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, USA
4 MAY 2013

On the occasion of the 16th International Scientific Symposium of US/ICOMOS, addressing the Historic Center and the Next City, Envisioning Urban Heritage Evolution, 200 delegates and students from all over the United States and 14 nations, met in Savannah, Georgia, May 1-4, 2013, to share experience, draw lessons and address issues raised by the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation (HUL), approved November 2011. The symposium benefited from the continuing reflection carried through World Heritage international and regional meetings addressing the historic urban landscape, 2004 to 2013. We drew on ICOMOS and UNESCO World Heritage guidance, expanding the construct for consideration of global urban heritage of all types, scales and significance and recognizing the interdependence of urban heritage areas with adjacent urban and rural lands and communities as a larger territory.

We recognize the fundamental issues and challenges facing human settlements in the 21st century, stated in the HUL document, to include:

- Universal desire for healthy, vital communities, largely unmet
- Challenges to achieving social justice and mutual respect for diverse heritage
- Global urban population increased by more than 50 percent, resulting in uncontrolled growth, projected to increase by 75 percent by 2030
- City population decline and devastating losses of urban fabric and heritage
- Socioeconomic stratification, transformations and functional changes questioning values
- Traditional separation of nature and culture, to the detriment of integration
- Climate change, natural disasters, impacts of armed conflict and need for greater resilience
- Urban environmental degradation, variable access to parks and open spaces
- Increased resource scarcity, addressing water, food, fuel, etc.
- Development pressures, starchitecture, city branding and urban heritage appropriation for corporate gain
- Global competition for economic growth and tourism income
- Overall lack of integration of culture-economy-ecology-community toward urban sustainability

We affirm that communities and historic urban landscapes are intertwined. People define and steward place shaping their lifeways through time in partnership with the landscape. Local knowledge and traditional and indigenous skills both imprint and sustain heritage landscapes and are to be studied, understood and respected in the preservation and conservation process. The full engagement of communities in the protection and sustaining of urban historic landscapes is foundational to employing the full range of HUL tools to include community engagement, knowledge and planning, regulatory systems, and financial tools. As a group we listened to, learned from and responded to presentations on HUL, research, analysis and tools applied to Stockholm, Mompox, Zanzibar, Doha, Edinburgh, Selma, Savannah, St. Augustine, Old San Juan, Detroit and beyond, exhibiting varying heritage, initiatives and preservation tools. We believe that by working holistically in a multi-value construct, we can retain historic character, features and traditions while adapting and developing our urban heritage on a pathway to a vital future.

The complexity and opportunities of urban heritage preservation is coming into clearer focus as an iterative process in diverse, living, human settlements. The UNESCO HUL Recommendation encapsulates the issues and opportunities and directs the way forward for dynamic communities with people and their values at the heart. To implement the HUL approach we stress the need to collaborate, cooperate and partner with all individuals, groups and organizations that dwell in, visit, learn from and steward our urban heritage as a leg of the sustainability stool, alongside economy, ecology and community. To this aim, we recognize the need to:

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- Pursue a community rooted, interdisciplinary approach within the cultural heritage field, in concert with diverse professionals and organizations, to identify, document, designate and manage urban heritage landscapes, using a holistic model to foster a collective understanding.
- Advocate the need for good governance as fundamental to solving global urbanization problems.
- Reexamine regulatory systems that may be refined to address the HUL paradigm, including historic district regulatory systems.
- Press forward broad engagement and training to build capacity and understanding at the professional and community level.
- Work on clarifying definitions and meanings of tangible and intangible heritage, particularly incorporating broad viewpoints and indigenous and traditional voices
- Re-examine and refine past constructs of urban heritage to define success for the 21st century, reviewing the baseline documents and fostering a dialogue about communities and preservation
- Focus additional attention on the historic urban landscape response to catastrophic events.
- Promulgate the integration of cultural and natural resources in historic urban landscapes toward a sustainable future, rather than the falsehood of separation of culture and nature.
- Develop guidance and examples that aid in sustainable tourism and quality of resident daily life, simultaneously.
- Recognize that multi-values are present in historic urban landscapes and that multiple voices, including strong community engagement, need to be brought to their protection and management.
- Respect the living traditions and local peoples that permeate the urban landscape with tangible and intangible heritage.
- Work toward greater integration of culture-economy-ecology-community at all levels toward urban sustainability in human settlements of all types.
- Foster sharing and broad global access to case studies and reporting on advances that demonstrate effective identification of, planning for, and application of historic urban landscape tools to further implement HUL.

We respect and deeply appreciate the urban heritage preservation and conservation efforts that have reached fruition. The HUL approach lays out a holistic integrated framework for human settlements and their settings. We affirm and support the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation and commit to its use in bringing urban concepts forward toward effective integration of all values that uplift our urban heritage, integrating past, present and future.

The participants of the 16th International Symposium adopt this declaration of principles and recommendations, addressing them to local and national government authorities, the citizens of communities, as well as institutions and non-governmental organizations, and international colleagues at UNESCO World Heritage, ICOMOS, partners ICCROM and IUCN. We extend our thanks to all who have made this symposium a rich exchange and thank our gracious SCAD hosts and their team in Savannah.

Adopted May 4, 2013, at the US/ICOMOS 16th International Scientific Symposium, Savannah, Georgia, USA.