

City must improve historic-preservation policies

To be a successful and competitive city, we cannot ignore our past accomplishments. We must value our past and build on it. This principle is true in business, government and culture, especially preservation of our architectural heritage. Our architectural history is a necessary part of Phoenix's future economic development, but our record is mixed — some successes and some dis-



My Turn

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appointments. It is time for Phoenix to revisit and improve its policy on historic preservation.

Countless studies have demonstrated that historic preservation is an economic engine. It costs less to reuse old buildings than to construct new ones. A recent analysis that examined Phoenix and other cities showed conclusively that reusing old buildings is in almost every case environmentally sounder

than new construction. Preserving old buildings creates a sense of place that is key to attracting and keeping talented employees and creative businesses. On every level, historic preservation significantly benefits a community.

Phoenix recently dodged a historic-preservation bullet. One of Frank Lloyd Wright's most significant buildings — the David and Gladys Wright House — was threatened with demolition. For months, many volunteers worked to save the building.

These are the unsung heroes who labored behind the scenes to save the house: an anonymous donor to whom we all are grateful, Larry Woodin and Janet Halstead of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy Board, Grady Gammage Jr., Will Bruder, Taz Loomans, Jim McPherson, Scott and Debbie Jarson, Alison King, Frank Henry, Roger Brevoort, Christine Noble, Colin Slais, Jennifer Boucek, Michelle Dodds of the Phoenix Office of Historic Preservation, Robert Joffe and



Volunteers worked for months to save the threatened David and Gladys Wright House. SCOTT JARSON/AZARCHITECTURE.COM

many others too numerous to list.

Preservation of the David Wright House is a victory for Phoenix, our state and even globally. The effort has taught a sobering lesson: Phoenix's approach to historic preservation, which has served us well for three decades, is not always adequate to ac-

complish our goals. We need to build on our past and improve our approach. Phoenix is maturing as a city, so we have an increasing number of historically significant buildings. Our current historic-preservation tools sometimes are not up to the task.

It is time to begin a community conversation to re-evaluate our priorities, policies and procedures so we can be more effective in historic preservation and at the same time respect private-property rights.

Phoenix has a proud history of building consensus through compromise. With thoughtful and respectful discussion, we can develop new policies that are right for Phoenix.

Beginning in the new year, I will assemble a team of skilled people to begin tackling this problem in an open process that will involve the entire community. With improved historic-preservation policies, Phoenix's best days are ahead.

Greg Stanton is mayor of Phoenix.