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Sustainability and Historic Preservation Panel Series Sponsored by the Trust for Architectural Easements Discusses the Financing of Sustainable Development

May 14, 2009, New York, NY – Buildings, by way of their construction and operation, have a greater impact on global warming than the auto industry. There are approximately 300 billion square feet of buildings in the United States that already exist, and at any one time there are 98 to 100 existing buildings for every building that is being constructed. And yet, of that 300 billion square feet, the Brookings Institute suggests that we are going to demolish 82 billion square feet of it and rebuild that 82 billion square feet in the next 20 years unless we decide to change our current culture that views buildings as disposable commodities.

The Trust for Architectural Easements, one of the largest preservation easement holding organizations in the United States, and Island Press, a leading environmental publisher, are co-sponsors of the successful Sustainability and Historic Preservation Thought Leader Discussion Series. The two-part panel series has traveled from Washington to New York and on to Boston and has included more than a dozen panelists - noted architects, preservationists, planners, developers and finance professionals. The panels addressed the questions “how policy and regulation affect sustainable development” and “how we finance sustainable development.”

At a recent panel in Boston, Jean Carroon, principal in charge of preservation at Goody, Clancy & Associates, said “Unless we have a culture that values reparability and durability, and the ability to retain what we already have, that we will never have a sustainable culture. And so that extends of course to a culture that now recycles bottles and cans as a matter of course, why don’t we also recycle buildings and the component parts of buildings as a matter of course?”

“And of course the best way to use the energy inside of a building is not to recycle it, but just to reuse it. The best way to use any part of something that already exists is to repair it, and to keep it in place and keep it functional. And yet, we are a culture that is quite drunk on the new. We are a culture that is often – and this is the dilemma that I face as a preservation architect – that even when it’s decided we can save the building or we have economic stimulus to save the building, I often don’t have the economic wherewithal to make using the component pieces of the building successful.”

The second panel of the traveling Sustainability and Historic Preservation Thought Leader Discussion Series – How we finance sustainable development – directly tackles the dilemma posed by Jean Carroon, above. The answer is a complicated one that requires new creative approaches, a transformation of our approach to historic preservation and sustainability, and the use of state and federal assistance such as the federal historic preservation easement program and rehabilitation tax credit program.

Another installment of the panel series will be held in New York City on Monday, May 18, 2009 from 6:30-8:00 pm at the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, located at 20 West 44th Street. The event is free to the public. To RSVP, please email dpierce@architecturaltrust.org or call 1-888-831-2107.

Paul Graziano, President of the Historic Districts Council, will join John Anderson, Structural Engineer at Robert Silman Associates; Dr. Catherine L. Ross, Director of the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development at Georgia Institute of Technology and Editor of Megaregions: Planning for Global Competitiveness (Island Press, 2009); and Walter Sedovic, Principal and CEO of Walter Sedovic Architects.

The Trust for Architectural Easements is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit organizations dedicated to voluntary preservation through easement donations. Island Press was established in 1984 to stimulate, shape and communicate the ideas that are essential for solving environmental problems.

- To listen to a podcast from either panel, visit www.architecturaltrust.org -