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In 1947, Jane Jacobs and her husband, the architect Robert Jacobs, bought a two-bedroom rowhouse in Greenwich Village for \$7,000. Today, the same home is worth more than \$6 million—and the ground floor tenant is a brokerage specializing in high-end real estate. Understanding how the value of a piece of urban property could grow nearly one thousand times over seven decades—even amid the crises of midcentury New York—is a question that lies at the heart of my dissertation, *Cities of Amber: Antigrowth Politics and the Making of Modern Liberalism, 1950–2008*. My project tells the story of how the current Democratic Party came to be through the changes that took place in the prosperous metro areas that now form its political base. Through synthesis of local and national history, I offer a new understanding of the thing that today we call “liberalism,” the influence of cities in its creation, and their role in making modern American society.

In the years immediately after World War II, the Democratic Party was emphatically supportive of urban growth. Beginning in the 1950s, however, Americans dismayed at the harms wrought by the country’s postwar development began to question the idea that prosperity demanded the continued expansion of the cities in which they lived. I propose *antigrowth politics* as new way of thinking about this important but poorly understood citizen movement. Tracing its origins to the midcentury backlash against urban renewal and suburban sprawl, I show how participants fought over the ensuing decades—often quite successfully—to guide, limit, or even reverse the course of urban development taking place in their backyards. On the peripheries of the country’s largest cities, conservationists enacted open-space protections, environmental review requirements, and other policies designed to “stop the bulldozer.” In urban centers, preservationists advocated for saving old buildings, while tenants’ groups mobilized in support of development restrictions to reverse the process that by the nineteen eighties had come to be known as “gentrification.” Together, these discrete struggles formed an unlikely, complex, and often inadvertent bicoastal movement that linked the interests of renters and homeowners, whites and people of color, the rich and the poor in inner cities and sprawling suburbs alike.

The support of the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative allowed me to complete a key chapter of my project. Tentatively titled “Salvation by Bricks: Preservation Politics and Spatial Ideology in Postwar New York,” the chapter reexamines and recontextualizes the modern historic preservation movement in the city where it found its greatest success. In popular imagination, preservation activism was kickstarted by the destruction of a single, exceptional, and particularly beloved old building: McKim, Mead & White’s Pennsylvania Station. This origin story is incorrect. Rather than the result of discrete battles over discrete buildings, I argue, the transformation of historic preservation into a citywide movement with profound influence on

New York's development is better understood as the product of what might be called a *spatial ideology*: a set of principles and beliefs about the relationship between the visceral appearance of the city, the quality of life it offered, and the character of its citizens. In preservationists' depiction, the ornamentation and detail that adorned old buildings were not just visually pleasing signs of the craftsmanship that went into their construction but also symbols of an urban society founded on a principle of stability. This idea, increasingly popular in an era of profound urban instability, suggested the number of New York's buildings worth saving was orders of magnitude larger than previous generations of preservationists had believed.

The shift toward a more expansive New York preservation movement also depended on a simultaneous shift in the composition of its supporters. Until the middle of the twentieth century, landmarking had been the niche interest of a small clique of conservative elites, the oldest of the Old Knickerbockers. In the era of urban renewal, however, they were joined by a larger group of what might be called neighborhood preservationists: white-collar professionals, intellectuals, and other liberals in the city's low-rise residential districts who identified as preservationists mainly through their status as homeowners and community members. Neighborhood preservationists believed that their blocks of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century homes were attractive to the people then fleeing for New York's suburbs in ways that modernist apartment blocks and office buildings were not. Some went so far as to argue that the aesthetics of older residential neighborhoods inculcated positive values in their inhabitants, through their architecture cultivating and reproducing a class of New Yorker who was more attentive to and caring about his surroundings.

In the context of midcentury cities, the theory that historic districts attracted the well-to-do residents, tax revenue, and investment dollars so desperately sought by municipal governments had profound implications. Not only did it portray historic preservation as a direct reaction to the scope and character of growth-oriented urban policies, it also implied that landmarking laws could achieve the same social ends sought by supporters of urban renewal with minimal physical intervention. At the heart of this idea was a financial incentive: the assurance that landmarking would, in the words of one preservationist, create "newly established prestige locations" where "the increase in value of the properties...will compensate many fold for the expenditure required to preserve landmark buildings." To that end, neighborhood preservationists embraced a form of preservation that was, until the late twentieth century, virtually unheard of outside of a small handful of southern cities: the *historic district*, which bestowed landmark protections across blocks of the city in one fell swoop. After initial interest in Greenwich Village and Brooklyn Heights—the two neighborhoods on which my chapter focuses—activism in favor of historic districts spread outward to other areas of the city with homeowners who also wanted, as one activist put it, "open space, livable apartments, a stable population, and corresponding land values." The success of this approach cannot be understated. In the nineteen fifties, even New York's most ardent preservationists had estimated that there were no more than a few hundred

structures within the five boroughs that deserved legal protection. By the end of the sixties, however, nearly five thousand properties citywide enjoyed protected status. Today, the number of landmarked buildings exceeds twenty-five thousand, the vast majority of which hold that honor not because of any particular significance but rather because they stand within a historic district.

In cities across the country—but particularly in New York—the spatial ideology of historic preservation thus became a means of chipping away, legally and philosophically, at the hegemonic midcentury model of urban growth. It also gave landmarking a novel political valence, offering an affirmative vision through which liberals could articulate their objections to the highways, high rises, and other modernist schemes intended to stanch the flow of people and capital from the metropolis. Their activism helped bring about the collapse of the liberal orthodoxy promoting metropolitan growth and laid the groundwork for a new urban politics far more skeptical of physical changes to the city—a politics whose effects are as visible today in the price of Manhattan real estate as in the beauty of its historic neighborhoods.