

## THE PRESERVE AMERICA SUMMIT

As 2006 approached, the historic preservation community began exploring ways to acknowledge four decades of progress under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which was signed in 1966. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) considered how it and other federal agencies could participate in the anniversary celebration in a manner commensurate with the historic preservation leadership role that the NHPA entrusts to the federal government. Toward that end, the ACHP proposed convening a summit of experts from across the country to review the major components of the national historic preservation program and to identify ways to improve current preservation efforts as well as explore new ideas for the future. In May 2006, First Lady Mrs. Laura Bush announced the ACHP would host the Preserve America Summit in the fall in New Orleans, Louisiana.

To ensure discussions at the Summit would be focused and productive, 11 panels of experts were created to meet beforehand and develop ideas for Summit participants to consider. Based on nominations submitted by the federal and non-federal partners helping to plan the Summit, the ACHP selected experts for the panels. Each panel had at least one federal and one non-federal co-chair who were tasked with coordinating the panel's work. The panels met during the summer of 2006.

Each panel was asked to identify approximately five key ideas that needed to be addressed to make preservation thrive in the coming decades. These ideas were presented in panel reports that were provided to all Summit participants, and they formed the foundation for discussions at the Summit. Click [here](#) for copies of these reports.

On October 18-20, 2006, more than 450 invited participants convened in New Orleans for the Preserve America Summit. Louisiana's Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu welcomed participants at the opening plenary, and Mrs. Bush delivered the keynote address. The opening plenary was followed by issue area sessions, where panel co-chairs, panelists, and other participants met to discuss the ideas embodied in the 11 issue area panel reports.

Meeting concurrently with the issue area sessions was the Preserve America Youth Summit, which was sponsored by Save Our History, an initiative of the History Channel to support history education, historic preservation, and heritage tourism. Thirty students from across the country who had actively engaged in Save Our History community preservation projects were invited to discuss their views on history and preservation with a team of educators.

The work of the issue area panels, Summit attendees, and Youth Summit participants resulted in the identification of 70 key ideas aimed at charting the future of the national preservation program. In the weeks following the Summit, the ACHP made those ideas available for public comment, and then developed an initial list of priority action areas. At its spring business meeting, May 9-10, 2007, the ACHP gave final approval to 13 recommendations on actions the federal government should take to enhance the effectiveness of the national historic preservation program as it moves toward 2016, the 50th anniversary of the NHPA.

In September 2007, the ACHP presented its recommendations in a report to the President and the First Lady. The ACHP will now work with partner federal agencies to advance implementation of these recommendations. All are ideas that should yield tangible products and that the federal government reasonably can be expected to implement in the near term. Their realization will promote continued growth and improvement in the federal preservation program and enhanced use and appreciation of America's invaluable heritage assets.