

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network announces its
46th Annual Statewide Preservation Conference

“RESILIENT BY DESIGN”

(Working Title)

Thursday, May 7 - Saturday, May 9, 2026
Edsel & Eleanor Ford House – The Visitor Center
Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan

Thursday and Friday are our major program days. Approximately 24 in-seat sessions are needed for three program tracks: Theme, Information, Applied Skills & Case Studies. Abstracts are welcomed from Michigan’s Upper and Lower Peninsulas as well as from neighboring states and Canada. They may come from individuals and panels.

Submission deadline is Sunday, September 21, 2025, 11:59 PM

About Our Theme: “Resilient by Design”

When we last gathered in Detroit in 2016, the city had just been named the first UNESCO “City of Design” in the United States. That same year marked milestone anniversaries: 50 years of the National Historic Preservation Act, 100 years of the National Park Service, and the MHPN’s 35th. It was a time of momentum and optimism.

Now, as we return a decade later to launch MHPN’s 45th anniversary, we find ourselves in a far more uncertain climate. Across the country, historic preservation faces serious threats—from the potential loss of the Federal Historic Preservation Fund, which supports critical staffing and grants, to the weakening of historic environmental protections and the sale of historic federal buildings. These changes risk halting projects, cancelling plans, and creating instability in both organizations and places large and small—especially in Michigan’s rural and historically marginalized communities.

And yet, this is exactly the moment to come together.

In Metro Detroit—home to more than 200 municipalities—we’ll explore not only the city’s design legacy, but also what will endure in the wider region’s distinctive architecture and preservation efforts in places like Southfield, Dearborn, and the Grosse Pointes. These communities, shaped by the anchor of Detroit, have developed their own uniquely diverse identities, increased their quality of life, and deepened their sense of place.

Across Michigan, preservation is deeply connected to economic development, resilience, and cultural identity. Asset mapping, local planning, and community storytelling are tools that help historic places survive and thrive through uncertainty—whether it’s climate change, market disruptions, or contested public memory.

This year's theme, Resilient by Design, honors the power of preservation to protect what matters and to build a stronger, more adaptable future.

Meet you in the D.

Three Conference Tracks and Their Audiences:

Our host community of Grosse Pointe Shores is furthest away from Detroit proper. Part of the historic communities that follow along the shoreline of Lake St. Clair eastward and northeastward from the city, it is joined by Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Farms, and Grosse Pointe Woods. The Grosse Pointes are home to traditional neighborhoods with noteworthy residences, churches, and public buildings; Modern designs are wonderful surprises. Pockets of original commercial activity are limited and in-scale with their neighborhoods, "The Village" in Grosse Pointe being the largest and a participant in the Michigan Main Street Program. Of the varied residences in the Grosse Pointes, the widely spaced lakefront mansions capture the most attention. Among these, the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, one of Michigan's 42 National Historic Landmarks, stands out.

Against this backdrop of the Grosse Pointes and the City of Detroit itself, we seek a wide array of abstracts for three program tracks. The basic conference program is organized into tracks so that participants have a better idea of each session's content. (No abstracts are sought for the tours that familiarize attendees with the host community. They are developed by each year's Conference Planning Group.)

Track One: "Theme" – This track focuses on the conference theme of "Resilient by Design." The track is for individual property owners, people in business and manufacturing, preservation professionals, craftspeople and tradespeople, elected and appointed officials, and government staff - anyone who is reclaiming and safeguarding cultural resources of importance to their communities. Of particular importance this year is that these cultural resources do not need to be in big cities or be National Historic Landmarks to offer important information to conference participants. They can simply reflect your community's efforts to protect what matters and be resilient in light of current challenges in the preservation field.

Track Two: "Information - What You Need to Know to Make Preservation Work" – This track is for those who need to know more about the laws, policies, and designations; the programs of assistance, tax incentives, and economic benefits; and the best practices and educational programs that provide support for the resiliency of cultural resources.

Track Three: "Applied Skills & Case Studies" – This track is for individual property owners, professionals doing design and hands-on work, and community officials who need to know more about the special design needs of historic buildings, traditional trades, and current building and development practices in the face of current challenges to the field of preservation.

Conference Abstract Submission Form:

The conference landing page is located at: www.mhpn.org/conference/

Please know you must have a Whova account to submit your session abstract. If you are already using Whova, your current login and account information is all that is needed to upload your abstract submission. New users will be required to create an account. To do so, click the "Session Abstract Portal" button on the conference landing page; when you then click on "Start

Proposal,” the system will have you create your account first. Contact Xiaohan Bao Smith with any questions you may have: xbaosmith@mhpnp.org.

To know more about what is needed for your abstract before you even begin, click the “Call for Abstracts – Information for Speakers” button on the conference landing page. Look at pages 3-4 to see what you need to have ready to complete the abstract. It’s the same as in years past.

A session abstract includes the following components. Your submission including these components is due on or before Sunday, September 21, 2025, by 11:59 PM.

NOTE: *It is not uncommon for speakers to be included in more than one session. While open to this, the Selection Committee asks speakers to limit themselves to two sessions.*

- **Session Title for the Brochure:** Provide a title of 125 characters + spaces or less that will capture the participant’s attention when they read the conference brochure or look through the Whova registration site.
- **Topic Statement:** A topic statement of 350 characters + spaces or less becomes the description in the conference brochure and on the Whova registration site – if your abstract is selected – meant to engage the participant’s interest so they attend your session.
- **Summary for Accreditation and Promotional Use:** In 2,000 characters + spaces or less, describe the session. This summary allows the Selection Committee to understand what you propose to achieve. NOTE: The MHPN endorses the *U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards* and, if appropriate to your topic, asks that you describe your adherence to them in this summary. **TIP:** Prepare this Summary first! You’ll often find that your opening and closing lines are what create a very good Topic Statement!
- **Learning Objectives:** Provide at least four (4) brief learning objectives fulfilled by your proposed session. These objectives help secure continuing education credits from the American Institute of Architects, American Institute of Certified Planners, Michigan Citizen Planners, etc. Format each objective so that in response to “After attending this session, participants will be able to _____”, you can start each objective using a word such as “Describe,” “Explain,” “Identify,” “Compare,” “Integrate,” “Summarize,” “Demonstrate,” “Discuss,” or other words that reflect your attendees will have gained new abilities through your presentation.

SAMPLE: “After attending this session, participants will be able to *describe* the key differences between historic and modern mortars.”

- **Program Track:** Tell us which of the three Program Tracks might be best for your session (see track descriptions above). Do know that if chosen, however, your session may be assigned to a different track based on how it fits into the overall program.
- **Time Needed:** Tell us how much time might be best for your session: 1 hour, 1.25 hours, or 1.5 hours. If chosen, you may be asked to adjust your time based on other submissions and timeslot availability.

- **Level of Difficulty of Session Content:** Basic – no prior knowledge of the topic is needed. Intermediate – some prior knowledge of the topic is useful. Advanced – background in the topic is preferred.
- **Type of Presentation:** Help us anticipate your tech and AV needs.
- **Sharing your Power Point:** Let us know if, after the conference, you are willing to send your power point to the MHPN to share with conference attendees.
- **Moderator:** Is there someone in your session who would like to serve as Moderator? If not, an MHPN Board Member or Emeriti Leader will be assigned.
- **OPTIONAL: Photos or Illustrations:** If there are visuals that can help the Selection Committee review your session, please upload them. Provide credits and an indication of whether we have permission to use them – i.e. in the MHPN newsletter, on the MHPN website or conference landing page.
- **Speaker's Contact Information:** For *each* speaker provide:
 - Name as it would appear in the conference brochure if the session is chosen. (For a panel, the first speaker listed should be the best one to contact with questions.)
 - Any suffixes to the name – i.e. Ph.D., AIA, Esq., CPA, etc. We do not use prefixes in the brochure.
 - Work Title
 - Work Affiliation
 - Mailing address including address, city, state, and zip code
 - Phone
 - Cell phone for calls and texts
 - E-mail address
 - Note your availability on Thursday, May 7, and Friday, May 8, 2026.

NOTE: Your personal information is used only for conference communications and is not shared outside the MHPN or sold.

- **Biography:** Provide 1,000 characters + spaces or less for *each* speaker, covering such things as education, relevant experience, role in a project, role in the session, etc.

Deadline:

Your Session Abstract Submission is due on or before Sunday, September 21, 2025, by 11:59 PM. Submit it following the instructions on the conference landing page of the MHPN's website – www.mhpn.org/conference/. Receipt will be acknowledged. Conference Co-Manager, Janet Kreger, can respond to e-mailed questions about abstract preparation – kregerj1981@att.net. *Sample abstracts for each Track are available on request.*

Acceptance/Decline and MHPN Terms of Participation:

During the first week of November, the Selection Committee will notify speakers who have been selected. Declines will also be acknowledged and those abstracts will be archived.

If a speaker is selected, the MHPN hosts them on the day he or she speaks for the registration fee, food, and beverages; tours and evening activities are discounted. In return, the speaker agrees to present during the assigned time slot without compensation, reimbursement for travel or overnight costs, or an honorarium. If a speaker attends the conference beyond the day(s) they present, they can register with the Student Discount as a small means by which we can say thank you.

Speaker Recognition:

Although speakers are not paid, their names and affiliations are included in a conference brochure with a distribution of 5,000 copies in Michigan, the Midwest, and around the country. Their participation is noted on preservation-related websites, social media sites, and in e-blasts. They are featured at a well-respected conference that draws 300-350 participants.

Thank you for submitting your abstract for a great session!

Current to: July 23, 2025