

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

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**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND AND NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
WITH SUPPORT FROM AMERICAN EXPRESS
TEAM UP TO HELP PRESERVE GULF COAST'S HISTORIC LANDMARKS
DEVASTATED BY HURRICANE KATRINA**

**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ADDS
NEW ORLEANS AND THE GULF COAST AS THE 101ST SITE
ON THE 2006 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH LIST OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES**

For Immediate Release—New York, NY, October 6, 2005 . . . The **World Monuments Fund** (WMF), the leading international organization dedicated to preserving cultural and architectural sites around the world, and the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, the leading national organization devoted to saving historic places and revitalizing America's communities, announced today that they have agreed to form a **partnership to advocate for restoration and sensitive reconstruction measures that respect the rich historic and cultural assets of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans**. This partnership, funded by a generous emergency grant of \$200,000 from the American Express Foundation, will combine the substantial resources of both organizations and focus on the immediate needs of assessing the damage, presenting viable options for restoration, initiating the planning process for reconstruction, and making sure that property owners and others can secure the funds needed to undertake long-term preservation.

WMF also announced today that it has **added the Gulf Coast and New Orleans as the 101st site to the 2006 World Monuments Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites**, noting that many historic structures across the region and in its major cities—Mobile, Gulf Port, Biloxi, and New Orleans—have been destroyed or significantly damaged by Hurricane Katrina and that it is critical to help ensure the survival of this distinctive culture heritage. Uniting public agencies and private organizations across the region, the Watch listing also includes nominations for New Orleans from the Historic District Landmarks Commission and Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans and the Mobile Historic Preservation Society and Alabama Preservation Alliance. Among the national landmark historic districts included in the nomination are Holy Cross and New Marigny in New Orleans, and Bay St. Louis and Biloxi in Mississippi. World Monuments Fund is working with the nominators to advocate for a thoughtful and an informed evaluation of the built heritage to prevent unnecessary demolition and to ensure the region's historic architecture is part of the reconstruction effort.

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“We recognize that heritage preservation is a secondary concern as extraordinary humanitarian relief efforts continue throughout the Gulf Coast region, but we also know from experience that there are things we can do now to prevent further loss later on,” said Bonnie Burnham, World Monuments Fund president. “Our unprecedented partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation will lay the important groundwork for these critical future efforts, as we provide ongoing support and resources to all the stakeholders in this devastated region, helping people to rebuild their communities and restore their lives.”

“This has the potential to be the greatest cultural catastrophe America has ever experienced. Rebuilding is essential, but it must acknowledge the historic character of one of the nation’s most distinctive regions,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “The goal of recovery should be to allow residents to come back home to healthy, vibrant, livable places that retain the heritage that makes them unique. Our partnership with the World Monuments Fund will enable us to work toward preventing the needless loss of countless historic places.”

“The region’s architecture is a symbol of stability and continuity. We need these icons to rebuild around,” said Ken P’Pool, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and a co-nominator of the Mississippi section of the Gulf Coast along with the Mississippi Heritage Trust.

WMF and NTHP are developing a four-part program that addresses the damage to the built heritage of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath of manmade and natural disasters, there is often an inevitable rush to demolish damaged structures and rebuild neighborhoods and cities from scratch. Because the scale and degree of damage to historic sites along the Gulf Coast and New Orleans are so overwhelming, WMF and NTHP are moving quickly to keep pace with national and local decision-making, and to support local cultural heritage and preservation organizations and regional stakeholders in demonstrating alternatives to razing entire neighborhoods. The program includes:

- ∞ **Emergency Assessment and Technical Assistance**
NTHP is taking the lead in coordinating volunteer experts to assist local and state preservation groups and public agencies, including FEMA, in assessing historic properties and developing preliminary stabilization measures. NTHP is working with WMF and other partners to select teams of preservation-experienced architects, conservators, and engineers who can inform early decisions that will affect the long-term preservation of the region’s built heritage. Teams of professionals are being deployed to the most severely impacted areas as prioritized by local and state partners on the ground. Information gathered from the field on the condition of individual landmarks and historic districts is being used to begin the process of restoration and reconstruction. NTHP team members are already providing immediate technical assistance with rehabilitation issues to local and state partners and government officials.

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- ∞ **Alternatives to Demolition: Restoration Viability & Treatment Options**
Drawing upon national and international precedents such as the rehabilitation of Charleston, South Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and the reconstruction of Prague, Czech Republic, and Dresden, Germany, following the floods of 2001, WMF is taking the lead in using these precedents to address the specific architecture and current conditions of the Gulf Coast. Information about urban and rural historic building types, their materials and construction technologies, and their post-disaster condition will be used to develop a series of case studies that will offer a range of options for short- and long-term preservation treatments and guidelines.

Using information already being gathered by the emergency assessments coordinated by NTHP, local and state partners, and other contacts and consultants on the ground, WMF will choose a range of building types ranging from the New Orleans “shotgun” house to the vernacular cottages of the Low Country and Mississippi. Special attention will be given to the impact of polluted flood waters and wind damage on historic materials and structures. The case studies will be judiciously chosen so as to have the maximum benefit for the poorest and the most underserved communities, which may lack the resources to advocate for restoration. These areas may include the Holy Cross Historic District in New Orleans’s Ninth Ward and Bay St. Louis National Landmark Historic District in Mississippi. Working with partners on the ground and in local communities, WMF will ensure that the restoration and treatment options are widely distributed and made available to historic property owners, private groups, and public agencies.

- ∞ **Design Vision for Reconstruction**
The historic character of the Gulf Coast is one of the region’s greatest economic assets, generating millions of dollar in tourism revenue each year. Reconstruction efforts in rural and urban neighborhoods that do not take into account the historic context will irreparably destroy the physical identity of the Gulf Coast and deprive it of a tool for economic recovery. The New Orleans historic districts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wood cottages are particularly vulnerable. Cottages should be saved and rehabilitated to the extent possible. **New design must respect historic typologies, scale, and materials, while also meeting the needs of residents who hope to return to their communities.**

Local groups such as the Fund for New Orleans and Community Labor United, a coalition of low-income groups in New Orleans, have already issued statements calling for the protection of the City’s architectural integrity and asking not to be left out of the planning process. **WMF plans to collaborate with national groups such as the Urban Land Institute, the American Institute of Architects, and the Urban League, and with community groups and local agencies to organize a design charette** to develop reconstruction options that respect the historic character while meeting the needs of communities most impacted by the disaster. The illustrated design options will be used in convening local stakeholders to garner consensus on reconstruction, and propose a set of illustrated guidelines for new construction in historic districts. Made available to private owners, public agencies, and interested parties throughout the region, these guidelines will help ensure that decisions for reconstruction are well considered, measured, and incorporate the values of residents and local communities.

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∞ **Initial Targeted Strategic Intervention Grants**

The National Trust Hurricane Recovery Fund has been established to assist community and preservation groups, as well as individual property owners to carry out professional assessments and reports on their historic properties. Reports from architects and engineers specializing in preservation are key to helping historic property owners secure insurance payments and government funding, such as FEMA grants, earmarked for landmark buildings. On a limited basis, financial assistance may also be directed by the National Trust toward emergency stabilization and conservation measures to prevent partial or wholesale loss of highly significant sites.

Through this unprecedented partnership, the World Monuments Fund and the National Trust for Historic Preservation will coordinate recovery and outreach efforts that will not only help prevent greater losses to this unique region, but will also help ensure that the cultural, historic, and architectural treasures that make the area so irreplaceable have a place in the long-term vision for the region. Bolstered by the generosity of American Express, the passion of countless local citizens, the dedication of local preservation organizations, and the capacity of a growing network of skilled professional volunteers, this joint program of WMF and NTHP will ensure that the legacy of New Orleans and the greater Gulf Coast region are kept firmly at the forefront over the coming months and years. These buildings and neighborhoods—these communities—are as much an integral part of the culture of the Gulf Coast area as are its celebrations, music, and food.

American Express and its Foundation have a long history of association with both the World Monuments Fund and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. American Express was the founding sponsor of WMF's World Monuments Watch program, inaugurated in 1996 with a \$10 million, ten year commitment to help save the world's most endangered heritage. During the same period American Express has made a number of grants to the NTHP to support its preservation initiatives, including the creation of its culture heritage tourism website.

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