

# Toward APT Consensus Principles for Practice on Renewing Modernism

*In 2014 a joint sub-committee of the APT Technical Committee on Modern Heritage and the Technical Committee on Sustainable Preservation was formed to plan a symposium entitled Renewing Modernism for the 2015 Kansas City APT annual conference. A goal for the symposium was the formulation of a set of guiding principles for the treatment of modern structures, particularly those considered to be of less than top-tier architectural value. The development of the principles is underway, and the technical committees would like to share with readers of the APT Bulletin this latest summary of the proceedings of the symposium. The principles are being refined—through the work of the sub-committee and an international peer-review process—into what we expect to codify over the next year as the APT Principles for Practice on Renewing Modernism.*

## Introduction

We are at a pivotal point in addressing the legacy of the built environment of the recent past. In the more than 25 years since the global design and preservation community became aware of the unprecedented and pressing issues raised by the vast corpus of modernism, much has been accomplished in more fully understanding the nature and importance of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century built resources. The dialogue among the global community of professionals dealing with conservation and reuse has already produced new guidelines, including the ICOMOS *Madrid Document on Approaches for the Conservation of 20th Century Architectural Heritage* and the Docomomo *Eindhoven-Seoul Statement*. These new documents complement the existing established international charters and have focused our ability to provide methodical, objective criteria for the treatment of modern resources.<sup>1</sup>

So why these APT Principles? The scale, variety, and uneven quality of much of the built environment of the modern period often necessitate interventions that significantly alter the fabric, use, and perception of a given property. Much of this work is performed under the rubric of “modernization”

and typically employs little, if any, conservation ethos. Thus, while more significant properties continue to be well served by existing international standards and charters, the APT Principles are designed specifically (though not exclusively) to address the perceived gap in coverage for the evaluation and treatment of what may be labeled “ordinary, everyday modernism,” those second- and third-tier resources that constitute a sizable component of the contemporary built environment.

What these workmanlike properties may lack in historic or architectural significance does not alter the facts that many of them nevertheless embody qualities that are representative of the cultural trends of their era and that they remain solid, useful building stock. The vastness of this inventory also represents an enormous amount of embodied energy whose retention should be exploited in the interest of environmental stewardship. Repurposing and renewing these structures with maximum reuse of original fabric represents the prudent use of finite resources and should be embraced as sound conservation practice in both the building and the environmental sense of the term. At the same time, every rehabilitation effort should plan for resilience to address future impacts of climate change, economic shifts, and demographics.

The Summary Proceedings outlined below embrace issues that support the philosophy and mission of APT—to promote practices that focus on maintaining the viability of the existing built environment. The APT Principles will be tailored, as they evolve, to complement existing international charters and standards that have guided heritage-conservation practice in general, as well as the *Eindhoven-Seoul Statement* and the *Madrid Document*, which specifically address modern properties. The APT Principles shall serve as guidelines for conservation practice and shall remain flexible and iterative to ensure their continued relevance.

## Summary Statement of Purpose

The APT Principles for Practice are a framework to provide guidance for engaging the full range of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century built environment. They acknowledge the need for adaptation and change and seek to foster practical renewal outcomes that best balance conservation, sustainability and resilience.

## Summary Proceedings

### Section A. Resource Documentation and Evaluation

#### 1. Evaluate early.

Preliminary evaluation should be undertaken before properties reach age-related eligibility thresholds, to allow for project funding and development time frames and to avoid harm to properties likely to become eligible upon reaching designation thresholds.

#### 2. Evaluate with rigor and realism.

Apply evaluation criteria for designation consistently, using scholarship and professional judgment as the basis for building consensus on significance. Examine the changing context of the building’s reception upon its original completion and over time, as well as the extent to which changing public perception informs plans for reuse. Physical building evaluation for master planning and reinvestment should look beyond traditional heritage-conservation criteria to assess the condition, robustness and potential adaptability of the resource.

#### 3. Acknowledge and embrace change, present and anticipated.

Evaluation should recognize a property’s overall timeline of significance and change over time. Evaluation of interventions and additions over time requires value judgments on quality, which depend on context and the integrity of the historic structure as a palimpsest, or succession of layers, rather than a resource with a fixed date of significance.

#### 4. Address the “sub-iconic.”

Seek consensus on character-defining qualities and spatial and material



hierarchies of significance for properties with limited architectural significance regardless of intrinsic historic value. Identify and evaluate technical, architectural and programmatic deficiencies and recommend areas and opportunities for positive evolution. Correlate evaluation findings to formulate an appropriate spectrum of treatment options, stressing adaptation of existing materials and assemblies where possible.

### Section B. Resource Treatment: Managing Interventions

#### 5. *A planned process for continual renewal.*

Document repair approaches, and develop short- and long-term maintenance strategies, including the rationale for design decisions, to support continuity in long-term care and an accurate understanding of conditions and change over time. Continue to emphasize the value of repair over replacement where feasible and justified.

#### 6. *Address the experimental and the ephemeral.*

Consider the material and historic significance of experimental technologies. Identify and document innovative design and construction technology. Acknowledge when exhausted materials or systems require replacement and if and how new fabric should be distinguished. Materials and components of limited durability, poor performance or hazardous nature may require focusing on preservation of design intent rather than repair and retention of original materials, but the rationale and path to these decisions should be clear and traceable. Attention to the ephemeral should include modern building-engineering systems. Optimize performance while seeking opportunities to retain and/or complement original appearance in exposed systems and devices.

#### 7. *Address patina.*

Exercise judgment regarding the treatment of patina to balance design intent and material maintenance needs. Although newness value is often identified with the appreciation of modern properties, some materials such as concrete, stainless steel and some

polymers do in fact acquire patina in a way that can alter and add potential richness to the perception and quality of the resource. Assessment of the value and management of patina should complement an awareness of original design intent and should avoid material harm.

### Section C. Holistic Solutions for Sustainable Preservation

#### 8. *Sustainability and resilience.*

Reinvestment strategies need to consider future adaptability, durability and recyclability, favoring material reuse as an environmental ethos, provided it supports the long-term viability of the property and interferes to the least degree possible with the essential character-defining features of the resource. Reinvestment planning should support long-term care and maintenance. Consider regenerative systems, net-positive energy and zero-carbon solutions wherever possible.

#### 9. *Human-centered performance.*

Reinvestment strategies need to consider occupant productivity and well-being, as well as building performance. Sustainability goals for building renewal should encourage and enable buildings to perform better naturally, by minimizing reliance on building systems, optimizing any inherent sustainable qualities of the original architecture and employing materials with no adverse environmental effect wherever possible. Operations policies should reinforce energy-conservation strategies and execution of sustainability improvements in day-to-day building operations.

#### 10. *Survival through robust change.*

Many underperforming modern assets, particularly but not exclusively those of lesser architectural significance, may require substantial intervention to better accommodate human needs (e.g., opening deep floor plates for improved daylight, and radical programmatic change). Establish prioritized categories of spatial and material significance to guide design and the assessment of options for meeting building performance and program requirements. Encourage creative approaches to engaging the old with the new.

#### 11. *Repurpose to accommodate the building.*

Changes in mandated area requirements, programmatic obsolescence and the emergence of new program types, along with evolving economic and social factors, often necessitate changes in the use of an existing building or complex. In developing rehabilitation plans, analyze the characteristics of the asset to understand the range of programs that complements the morphology of the property to enable optimal fit of program to resource. This will foster efficient strategies for reuse and repurposing that work while complementing the inherent material and form of the buildings, minimizing the need for intervention, capitalizing on the potential latent within the structure and ultimately reducing cost.

#### 12. *Promulgate model solutions, management guides and lessons learned.*

Document modern asset challenges that were overcome in the project and multi-property regeneration case studies that may benefit similar efforts elsewhere.

#### 13. *Future stewardship: soliciting, guiding best-value balance.*

When prospects for viable reuse are uncertain, explore options for redevelopment, reuse or alternative management by soliciting non-binding expressions of interest to assess opportunities potentially offering the best value in balancing stewardship and financial sustainability goals.

Consider alternative models of future management and stewardship conducive to the ongoing productive use of the asset while including exit-strategy provisions for alternatives that prove unsuccessful. Develop broad, property-specific guidance for long-term stewardship applicable to any reuse scenario, such as building-preservation plans and design guidelines, to be included by reference in operational agreements or conveyance documents.

1. International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), *Madrid Document on Approaches for the Conservation of 20th Century Architectural Heritage, Second Edition, 2014*. Docomomo International, *Eindhoven-Seoul Statement, 2014*; this document updates the original Eindhoven Statement published in 1990 to acknowledge the role of sustainability in the conservation and renewal of modern resources.