We have built society on the backs of our historic and natural resources and at the same time we are working to destroy them. The movements that seek to protect these resources are both vibrant but they do not always acknowledge their common ground. While they may not have the same specific aims, these two groups influence each other’s trajectories and resources. This influence can be constructive or destructive depending on the time taken to understand where their goals are shared and where they diverge.

As stewards of the built environment we must observe and analyze the current trends in the building industry that affect our resources. Recently “sustainable design” and “green building” have become accepted strategies in construction projects of all kinds. Companies that have a particular environmental cause or those that would like to be seen as having a positive impact on the environment are searching for ways to show that their buildings are “green”. With that in mind, we must understand how this trend is affecting our historic resources, how we can mitigate negative impacts and how to stimulate positive interactions between preservation and environmentalism.

One of the increasingly common ways to demonstrate a commitment to the environment in the context of a building is through rating systems. In the past ten years many environmental building rating systems have been created and applied to projects worldwide. Of these, the most influential in the United States has been the U. S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) rating system. In recognition of the expanding use of the USGBC’s LEED™ Green Building Rating System, this thesis focuses specifically on the effects of environmentally motivated decisions on historic fabric through the application of the LEED™ system. This thesis does not assume that LEED™ necessarily brings out the best in preservation practice and will look to the conflicts and convergences between historic preservation and environmentalism in general for insight into how and when their aims can be mutually reinforcing.