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Modes, Means and Measures: Adapting Sustainability Indicators to Assess Preservation Activity's Impact on Community Equity

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Document Type

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Degree Program

Regional Planning

Degree Type

Master of Regional Planning (M.R.P.)

Year Degree Awarded

2009

Month Degree Awarded

May

Keywords

preservation, historic preservation, sustainability, social equity, rehabilitation, community indicator

Abstract

Preservation of and reinvestment in the built environment as a redevelopment tool has been used by cities and towns across the country, in many cases providing significant social, economic and environmental benefits. Potential social effects have often been the least explored aspect of sustainable development, especially with regard to preservation, yet they are often the most challenging, particularly given the potential for displacement.

This thesis reviews literature where the issues of preservation, redevelopment and sustainability intersect. A set of best practices was developed that can be applied to other cities and towns to help balance preservation- and equity- enhancing activities. Another result of this

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research is the development of appropriate community indicators to provide means for measuring the effects of preservation on social equity. A selection of the indicators will be applied to two selected case studies (Northampton and Pittsfield, MA) to explore how such indicators can work as a measurement tool, how to best adapt them for a community, and their comparative strengths and weaknesses.

The findings section addresses the data at both the fine and coarse grain – for the indicators and best practices as well as for the overall observations from the study process.

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