

TO: Nick Goldsmith, Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Ithaca

CC: Susan Holland, Director of Historic Ithaca, Jennifer Minner

FROM: Tyler Kutty, Land Use Planning Methods, Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning

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SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Equity Recommendations for Ithaca's Green New Deal

The City and Town of Ithaca's Green New Deal resolutions have identified the importance of Historic Preservation in the path towards carbon neutrality. In order to also comply with the Green New Deal's other objective to equitably share the benefits of the Green New Deal across all groups of people in the greater Ithaca area, certain aspects of historic preservation must be considered and measured. By incorporating examples of workforce development initiatives, building waste reduction policies, and the preservation of cultural assets as they pertain to historic preservation, the Green New Deal can work as both a tool to increase the sustainability of Ithaca as well as the equity in building a historic preservation program that benefits all residents. This memo, created for Jennifer Minner's Land Use Methods class, will explore how to create these equity models in indicators for Historic Preservation through examples from the Ithaca community as well as regions across the country while promoting sustainability and the path towards Ithaca's carbon neutrality.

Workforce Development and Historic Preservation

Metric 1: Building Waste Reduction

Many of the buildings that do end up being demolished in order to facilitate new construction are salvageable, leading to waste of building materials. This had led to some organizations to focus on deconstruction in place of demolition. Deconstruction involves taking salvageable materials such as wood supports, stone and masonry, metals, and architectural details (ranging from sconces to ceiling tiles) to be reused in future projects, saving materials from the landfill. While some materials, such as structural wood, may not hold a significant value in the market, this is more than made up by materials such as historic stones, masonry, and architectural details which can be used in future projects or sold to recoup the costs of deconstruction. Deconstruction also drastically reduces the external costs of demolition, the environmental costs created by the use of landfills and material extraction. Using the generalizations in the carbon footprint of mineral extraction or landfill use, a direct environmental impact can be measured for deconstruction.¹

Because of the increased direct costs of deconstruction compared to demolition, deconstruction ordinances also have the potential of greatly decreasing the feasibility of new construction in places of historic significance or built infrastructure. This can lead to important

¹ (Minner, December 2017, p. 117)

impacts such as the preservation of significant cultural assets that will be explored later. Instead, redevelopment would be channeled into patterns of sustainable development such as infill and repairing or increasing neighborhood density in areas that have been affected by the urban renewal projects or past decades. These effects have been seen in Portland, Oregon where deconstruction efforts have significantly reduced demolition of salvageable buildings and have instead seen the reuse to historic structures.² Similar projects are already present in the City of Ithaca such as the Carey Building, which was fueled by historic protections. Deconstruction ordinances can increase the prevalence of these projects and strengthen historic ordinances by introducing a new economic barrier to demolition while providing an avenue to still make new construction feasible. This metric can be measured by the issuance of demolition permits and a new reconstruction permits. The City and Town can monitor and map these statistics, determining which neighborhoods are seeing a reduction in demolition permits in favor of reconstruction permits and restoration efforts.

Metric 2: Job creation

Deconstruction, however, takes much more human-power than a traditional demolition of a site, requiring the use of skilled workers, especially in historic sites, in order to preserve important architectural pieces. Other preservation efforts such as restoration, rehabilitation, reuse and conversion all require highly skilled and specialized employment. Many historic preservation organizations have taken the opportunity to use this employment as a chance to reinvest in the local community. The Corps Network refers to this type of employment as green jobs, employment that works to promote both environmental sustainability and local workforce development.³ They refer to the existing network of community colleges, trade education sites, and precollege programs as a potential area to focus training in new green jobs such as historic preservation work.⁴ Nonprofit community based organizations have been identified as a potential place to connect youth with workforce development opportunities. It can be difficult for new organizations or governmental programs to build trust in a disadvantaged community, making it necessary for community-based organization to participate in the creation of green jobs and workforce development.⁵

Within Tompkins County, Historic Ithaca has partnered with local community-based organizations and youth employment initiatives to create Work Preserve, a green job centered workforce development opportunity. Over a six-week summer training program, local youth learn preservation skills while working on real world projects such as retail management of Historic Ithaca's nonprofit salvage store, Significant Elements, as well as furniture construction and refurbishment. Through this program, local youth not only learn valuable preservation and carpentry skills, they gain an understanding and appreciation for the value of the historic architecture and works.⁶

² (Minner, December 2017, p. 116)

³ (Grobe, O'Sullivan, Prouty, & White, June 2011, p. 8)

⁴ (Grobe, O'Sullivan, Prouty, & White, June 2011, p. 13)

⁵ (Grobe, O'Sullivan, Prouty, & White, June 2011, p. 14)

⁶ (Historic Ithaca, 2018)

Programs such as Work Preserve are a significant way in which communities can help to create jobs in the local community through preservation and sustainability, but this can extend beyond youth related programs. Initiatives can include jobs training in other preservation and sustainability fields, such as the appointing of historic masonry, repairing of architectural details, disassembly of sites, and construction to existing structures. Retrofitting existing historic structures to meet energy efficiency demand requires is a labor-intensive process that requires a vast array of knowledge in varying construction techniques such as building science, green buildings, building weatherization and repair, and energy efficiency tactics. By working in the local community to prepare residents for these types of green jobs, organization are investing in the local workforce and building the knowledge of the local community while preserving the historical fabric of the city and working towards a carbon neutral Ithaca.⁷

To monitor the success of these programs, the creation of jobs through historic projects can be monitored and mapped, with the aim of encouraging local jobs training and creation initiatives. This data can be collected when applying for historic tax credits or federal and local funding. It can also be identified during the permitting process or through workforce development initiatives themselves. By ensuring that projects are using the local workforce, historic preservation and sustainability can work to increase the opportunities available to all residents of the Ithaca community.

Finding the balance between preservation, affordability, and sustainability

Metric 3: Unit affordability withing historic properties

When considering externalities such as the cost of material extraction, waste creation, and the price of new materials, Historic Preservation often makes economic sense, especially in the long term. However, preserving the current structure can create significant short-term financial demands on a developer, making it less feasible to keep housing in historic projects below the market rate. This makes it important to provide incentives or allow for other revenue sources when working with developers to create these kinds of projects. This can include tax incentives, historic credits, state and federal grants, and local incentives, which when working in combination can create a sustainable and affordable project.

In Baltimore, historic tax credits reinvestment funds, and state and federal grants have been used to retrofit vacant brownstones in the Oliver neighborhoods of the City. The programs work to encourage developers to invest at least 25% percent of the projects value, encouraging the transformation of once vacant properties into a symbol of pride for the community. Instead of seeing more demolitions in the neighborhood, Oliver residents are experiencing reinvestment to existing structures and infill and new development in vacant lots, preserving not only the buildings but the historic character of the neighborhood.⁸ Government funding is just one piece of the puzzle in creating affordable preservation. In New York City, the creation of new retail and has helped keep Penn South, a fixed income complex in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, affordable in one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Manhattan. There,

⁷ (Grobe, O'Sullivan, Prouty, & White, June 2011, p. 13)

⁸ (Schiszik, 2017)

developers introduced mixed use into a predominantly residential property as well as finding innovative ways to increase the square footage of the project in order to keep the property affordable in Manhattan's housing market. This helped preserve the existing structure, which was not considered a historical site but was valued by the residents for its character and maintaining its affordable status.⁹

Within the City of Ithaca, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS) most recent project, Founder's Way, is retrofitting the former Immaculate Conception School into 42-55 mixed income housing units. This project is intended to preserve not only the architectural details of the existing school but what it means to the community. However, a simple retrofit of the existing structure into any below market rates units would make the project unfeasible, making it necessary for INHS to expand upon the existing structure. By allowing for site additions, INHS has found a way to increase the number of units to a feasible level. The result will be an energy efficient building that allows for multiple income levels while preserving and improving the urban fabric of the neighborhood as well as preserving the structure's importance to the local community.¹⁰

By changing the structure's use, purpose, or size, developers have found ways to avoid demolition, create sustainable properties, and maintain affordability. To measure this metric, the number of affordable units within historic projects can be tracked and mapped to understand where new units are being created and preserved. This can have the impact of better understanding which types of properties are best suited for retrofits, which ones can be more easily adapted, and which projects maintain a long-term success.

Preserving important cultural and historic sites

Historic preservation extends well beyond preserving structures. Many times, places are designated as historic sites because of their cultural importance to the communities they are located in. In Ithaca, this has worked to help preserve important cultural sites for the black community, including the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity house in Fall Creek. The house, which was the original home to one of the nation's first black fraternities, was named a historic landmark in 2015, helping to preserve and rehabilitate the site.¹¹

In Baltimore, initiatives in the Oliver neighborhood have extended beyond maintaining affordability, they have worked to preserve the cultural fabric of the neighborhood. As one of the last black neighborhoods in the city after urban renewal projects of the past century, Oliver has seen a resurgence through the preservation of the remaining properties. Clean and safe homes have been created from vacant brownstones and local community gathering places such as churches and schools have been retrofitted to preserve their character and their community importance while still finding a new use that can complement its former purpose. Development is returning to a neighborhood which has been critically underserved in recent decades, bringing hope back to a place where even residents believed was unsalvageable. This has not only saved

⁹ (Rodriguez & Tomlan, 2014, p. 62)

¹⁰ (Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, n.d.)

¹¹ (Friedman, 2016)

the buildings in Oliver and the built environment; it has worked to preserve a community which was threatened and at the brink of being demolished through blight removal and urban renewal practices.¹²

These sites are an important aspect of preservation, and while they may not be uniquely quantifiable, they show the impact that preservation can have on a community. In both Baltimore and Ithaca, it is possible that these sites could have been demolished, leaving their cultural importance abandoned and possibly forgotten. Through their preservation, there is not a physical marker and signifier of importance to the communities that, but through preservation their while providing a sustainable alternative to demolition.

Preservation is more than a tool for sustainability, it is a practice that allows for equity to compliment the need for greener infrastructure in our built environment. Through the implementation and measurement of these policy recommendation, the Green New Deal can be both a beacon for sustainable practices and an opportunity to spread those benefits to all residents through the use of Historic Preservation.

¹² (Schiszik, 2017)

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