

## **Redeveloping the Built Environment: Perceived Value in Historic Properties**

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### **Abstract**

While maintaining an important role in an urban community's planning strategy, historic preservation often loses attention when competing with economic revitalization, environmental degradation, and smart growth. Boasting strategic location and unique character, structures listed on the National Historic Register must attract commercial developers willing to commit to enhancing the historical integrity of the building as well as providing it with new economic vitality and relevance in the community. Yet all members of the community, including local and state governments, may have different views regarding the various choices made between modification and conservation in the process. Community participants share no widely-accepted standards by which to measure the end result of an historic redevelopment. Through intercept surveys, interviews, and historic research, this study highlights the process of creating a beneficial tool that a historic preservation board or other polity may use to begin assessing redevelopment of an historic site. Using a case study of a recently redeveloped structure in Austin, Texas to frame the process, the instrument emerges as an aid to promote community discussion and assess overall satisfaction with both the restored structure and the new commercial endeavor.

**Keywords:** historic preservation, planning, perception.

### **Introduction**

In urban areas of the United States, critical issues such as economic revitalization, gentrification, and affordable housing often dominate the crowded government agenda. Any available space, empty or occupied by a deteriorating building, possesses great potential for quick returns for developers capitalizing on the constantly changing needs and demands of a dynamic urban system. When lacking monetary incentives, the preservation of historic properties, those properties listed as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places may lose the deserved attention of the public, the local government, and developers. Without intervention in the processes of urban development,

places valued for their information about the past, time-worn beauty, commemorative spirit, or treasured narrative, are often destroyed without proper consideration of these difficult to measure values (Datel 1985). An economic perspective might contend that wholesale redevelopment is preferable, as the value of the land as a commodity often far surpasses that of the century-old structure requiring substantial updating before one fully restores functionality. However, many governmental and private entities recognize the intrinsic worth of the historic built environment and its effect on the surrounding community. Public opinion matters in the redevelopment of historic districts, for their judgment the product often shapes the future of both the planning division of the local government and the developer involved with the property. Although some local governments make generous allowances in property taxes for historic districts, developers often shy away from attempting to create a functional property out of a building or space labeled “historic” due to uncertainty about the costs and time constraints. Without the preservation of the historic properties in urban America, pieces of the past fade.

Downtown redevelopment efforts in Austin, Texas faced a new challenge in 2000, when the City Council adopted new design guidelines. The Second Street District Streetscape Improvement project sought to establish a pedestrian-friendly connection surrounding the City Hall building and the Austin Convention Center, a distance of less than ten blocks. Within this new Second Street District sat the old Schneider Building, a two-story brick building from the Victorian era identified as an historic site in 1979 (Figure 1). The City used eminent domain to gain possession of the property. Nearby developments include high-end restaurants, specialty stores, and residential high-rises. The site itself now holds Lambert’s BBQ as a tenant, an upscale barbecue joint boasting a fine wine list and live music upstairs on weekends. Encompassing an urban location, a new commercial purpose, and surrounding redevelopment efforts, the JP Schneider Building at 401 W 2<sup>nd</sup> St. will be the target site of this study. This choice fits well due to the potential for analysis of historic value of the building combined with its new use in an area of intense redevelopment.

The problem at hand is an apparent lack of attention given to the perception of the various values assigned to an historic redevelopment by a community. Previous research focused on the perceptions of a specific, singular group of people (Coetier 2002). This research contends that the absence of any holistic analysis of the situation may lead to the exclusion of community members during redevelopments. Three broad areas, stemming from the diverse interests present in a redevelopment project, warrant assessment: the economic issues, the historic preservation of the property, and the public’s perspective of the resulting development. This leads to four research questions. Do common standards exist among the judgment criteria of these groups? How can a commercial property maintain its historic integrity after redevelopment? What achieved goal, viability, profitability constitutes economic success of these



**Figure 1.** The earliest known photograph of the Schneider Building, C00130, Chalberg Collection of Prints and Negatives, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

redevelopments? What factors affect public opinion of commercial redevelopment of historic properties?

The unique contribution made by this study lies in applying a geographic perspective to the combination of the perceptions of the involved parties in the event of a commercial redevelopment housed in an historic site. By considering the values of each of the three identified segments, the public, the developer, and the government, the result provides a more holistic picture of the overall measurement process of the site by the entire community. Realistically inevitable, the exclusion of portions of the community can skew this approach, so care must be taken to carefully remain as inclusive as possible in the practice of this method as a tool.

### Literature Review

Although historic preservation lays claim to its own large body of literature, this study engages specifically with geographic lines of thought regarding the interaction of humans with space. The geographic perspective of historic preservation began in the exploration of landscape in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Few geographers explicitly researched the topic until after the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) passed through Congress in 1966. Out of these various inquiries emerged a more critical perspective in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lees 2001; Llewellyn 2003), which enabled geographers to delve into more specialized connections to historic preservation including memorialization (Foote 2003; Inwood 2009) and social memory (DeLyser 2003; Colten and Sumpter 2009).

Several fields outside of geography contribute to the metanarrative of historic preservation. Planning, history, architecture, and anthropology, as well as many other academic fields consider issues of preservation within their realms of thought. Outside of geography, work that tends toward applied research out of the fields of planning and architecture appears most relevant to this project. Geographic perspective lends a unique lens to historic preservation as “[i]t needs to explain architecture as a social product, as the spatial configuration of the built environment incorporating economic, political, and ideological dimensions” (Goss 1988 p. 394). Thus the methodology of this project stems from a geographic empirical grounding complemented by insights from economics, architecture, and planning.

Landscape studies, beginning with Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School, embraced an innovative approach that included consideration of historic context when examining new spaces (Sauer 1941). Fred Kniffen and Wilber Zelinsky, both students of Sauer, carefully explored pieces of historic landscapes that bordered on preservation issues through housing and settlement patterns (1936 and 1951, respectively). Geographers reached to historic preservation more directly in the aftermath of the passing of the NHPA (Ford 1974; Lewis 1976; Lowenthal 1979). These preliminary endeavors served to invigorate urban and regional studies to consider historic preservation in their analyses. In addition, geographers formulated new directions for geographic inquiry into the broader concept of preservation as it continued to gain popularity through its use in economic revitalization projects throughout the United States (Dattel 1985 and 1990; Goss 1988; Hayden 1988 and 1994).

Limited work explicitly considers the perception of the historic built environment, an inherently geographic side of preservation. Social spaces can be separated into two distinct categories: objective and subjective, the contrasting element being perception (Buttimer 1969). The value of that subjective social space, then, is defined by the perceptions of those that experience it. Upon examination of the inconsistent opinions of British critics and experts of cultural landscape, David Matless describes sensory perception as everything from scientific realism to spiritual appraisal (1996). This lack of cohesion in the psychological origins of perception amplifies an already complex human environment to become a nearly incomprehensible jumble of buildings, meanings, functions, and emotions. Loader and Zink (1985) further explore this inability to find a shared valuing system influencing perception, attributing the problem to a lack of theoretical background and terminology available for enabling

communication among stakeholders. Additionally, they assert the importance of recognizing that common interpretations by similar people do not extend to the entire affected population when considering an historic property (Loader and Zink 1985). J.F. Coeterier (2002) touches upon the matter of differing valuing strategies, emphasizing an implicit significance of aesthetic observations over information provided about a site or building based on personal interviews. Other works in geography considering perspective delve into sites associated with negative connotations due to their historic context, and how these spaces are preserved to maintain or sever connections with their past (Foote 2003; Hagen 2005 and 2009; Stangl 2006). In fact, the combination of shared experiences of preserved sites, no matter the source of their historic relevance, may actually create an additional value beyond that of the individual experience (Sable and Kling 2001).

### **Data Collection**

This research employed a case study approach, collecting and analyzing qualitative data focused on the Schneider Building in downtown Austin, Texas (Yin 2003). Data collection consisted of three components: archival research, intercept surveys, and interviews. Initially, archival research outlined facts to describe the history of the building, its former uses and all previous redevelopment attempts. Sources included local media outlets, Texas Historical Commission files, the City of Austin website, and the building's listing on National Register of Historic Places. Compiling this data, the authors constructed a basic chronology of the building from its initial construction to the most recent redevelopment.

After receiving an exemption from the Institutional Review Board, we surveyed the public to ascertain themes in their perception of redeveloped historic properties such as the Schneider Building. Standing within the sight of the Schneider Building, the lead author conducted twenty-five oral surveys. Stopping briefly and responding to thirteen questions, participants expressed their opinions on the preservation, use, and value of the Schneider Building. Not intended to produce data for intense quantitative analysis, these surveys helped identify elements of the preservation process that the public perceived to be important.

Finally, each of the remaining identified parties in the redevelopment process: the city, the architect, and the tenants, were interviewed. A simple ten question interview delved into their experiences regarding the restoration and redevelopment of the site. Participants provided their perspective on the process, including an assessment of the value of the end result.

### **Archival Research**

The building at 401 W 2<sup>nd</sup> St originally housed a mercantile store owned by J.P. Schneider. Some discrepancy exists regarding the actual age of the Schneider Building itself. The family maintains a construction date of 1873;

however, based on the area's Sanborn maps, the Historical Commission estimates that date to fall between 1889 and 1894. Regardless of the exact age of the building, its prominence in downtown Austin at the time of its construction is undisputed. The tall brick structure dominated the surrounding urban landscape as the only two-storey masonry structure in the vicinity (Texas Historical Commission 1984). During the early years of the Schneider Building's existence, the surrounding neighborhood known as Guytown hosted a number of brothels and bars (Quin and Scheibal 2001). The Schneider household lived across the street from the store, using the older structure as a storage facility. Until 1935, the Schneider family continued to operate the store with minor alterations, such as the inclusion of a shelling facility for pecans as well as a saloon after the ratification of the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment in 1933 (Schneider 1984). The store sold goods including "cotton, furs, flour, fish, sugar, salt, meat, farm implements, fruits and vegetables, shoes and boots, tombstones and coffins" (THC – Atlas 1979).

In subsequent years, the economic reality of downtown Austin affected the successful re-use of the old Schneider Building. The Schneider family leased the store to several different businesses over the next decades, including the Electrical Service Company, the Calcasieu Lumber Company, and Economy Engraving. Two fires mostly destroyed the interior of the structure, first in the 1930s then again in 1971 (Schneider 1984). In the 1970s, a series of events began that would eventually lead to the historic restoration and adaptive reuse of the site. The City of Austin looked to acquire the blocks along Town Lake for inclusion in a redevelopment plan that would create a new municipal complex. According to local media, the city first planned to rezone the property in an historic district and then condemn the Schneider Building. The Schneider family reportedly reacted to the potential loss by initiating contact with the Texas Historical Commission to explore the option of designating the property historic (Jackson 1988). The Schneider Building earned a nomination for listing in 1978, and shortly thereafter it entered the ranks of the National Register of Historic Places (Texas Historical Commission 1979).

The Schneider Building received another nomination for an historic designation in late 1984, and the process culminated in 1985 with the recognition of the site as a State Archaeological Landmark (Texas Antiquities Commission 1985). During this same time period, the City of Austin published a Request for Proposals for the development of a municipal office complex on several blocks adjacent to Town Lake, including the Schneider Building property. The proposal specified demolition for all buildings currently situated in the area except for the Schneider Building, which was to be relocated (RFP 1984). Based on reactionary correspondence from the Texas Historical Commission to city staff, the decision to move the building did not meet with their approval (Texas Historical Commission 1984). In the end, nothing came of the proposals, as the economic downturn of the 1980s forced the City to scrap the development plans for the time being (Jason 1993). The only restoration the

building enjoyed consisted of a general building stabilization and a temporary roof in 1988 (Texas Historical Commission 1988). Over the next several years, potential tenants contacted the City hoping to make use of the property but none successfully obtained a lease, possibly due to the cost prohibitive nature of any interior renovations (Rigler 1988, Jason 1993).

The Schneider Building continued to deteriorate until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Little completed the work on the Schneider Building in 2001, stating that the intended use now included mechanical, retail, and office space (Texas Historical Commission 2000). The next year the City began the process of applying for the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program in order to allow for adaptive reuse in the near future. Intended for use as a restaurant, the City and Emily Little Architects received permission from the Texas Historical Commission to complete additional work on the Schneider Building in 2006 to include a complete interior finish-out on all three levels. Completing the interior restoration within a year, Lambert's began business as an upscale barbecue restaurant (Texas Historical Commission 2006).

### Surveys

Standing just across the street from the Schneider Building, the lead author conducted brief intercept surveys consisting of thirteen questions (Appendix) focused on elements of the participants' perception of the Schneider Building. Respondents included passersby willing to spend a few minutes of their time speaking with me: downtown residents taking walks; Austin residents visiting the farmer's market two blocks north of the Schneider Building; and tourists from as far away as Great Britain. Twenty-four of the twenty-five survey participants stated the Schneider Building is a valuable historic site. Similarly, only one participant considered the historic preservation to be neither successful nor unsuccessful. The success rating of the business did not match that of the historic preservation, but did fare well with mostly "Very Successful" and "Somewhat Successful" answers. Interestingly, the outcome of the question regarding the consideration of public opinion did not lend itself to easy interpretation. Several people expressed that by simply restoring the building, public opinion had been considered. I suspect these participants equated public opinion with preservationist opinion, but I did not delve further into this during the survey. Whatever public input was allowed to affect the development decisions, the respondents generally wished to change nothing about the site.

The second group of questions allowed participants some creativity as they imagined a reality in which the site did not exist at all. Initially, the people had to identify a site that would replace the Schneider Building and Lambert's Restaurant for their purposes. For several people, this task proved remarkably simple – they claimed it would make no difference to them if the site no longer existed, and so they required no replacement. Whether the participants consciously realized the gravity of their statements is unknown, but this answer

captured a very curious demographic: one which did not acknowledge any value in the site for either its history or use. Another recurrent answer chose the area of South Congress as a replacement. Running along Congress Avenue south of Town Lake, unique locally owned businesses including restaurants and uncommon specialty shops speckle the landscape. The majority of respondents chose locations with a principal use of dining; only one participant stated that they would visit another historical location. The second question in this vein challenged participants to decide what they would put into the blank space if the Schneider Building was removed. In accordance with the results of the previous question, the most frequently offered answer was another restaurant. Some participants took a few moments to ponder this task for a moment, and provided more creative solutions such as a visitor's center, a continuation of the Computer Science Corporation development, or a grocery market. Second to another restaurant, participants most wanted to see open space such as a garden or park on the corner lot.

The final two questions in this section gave participants a chance to identify the characteristic of the site for which they would feel the most and least loss. The options included the historic value, the restaurant itself, the local business, the convenience, and community ambience. Only two people stated that the restaurant would evoke the greatest sense of loss for them, while eleven people ranked the loss of restaurant as the least critical. The historic value and community ambience aspects made up the majority of responses for the greatest sense of loss, while convenience and the restaurant dominated the replies for least sense of loss. These answers revealed a disconnect between the recognition of historic value as a desirable characteristic to a site and recognition of historic value as the purpose of a preserved site. The two least chosen answers, the restaurant and convenience, seem to belie the common desire to see a restaurant in this space. If the participants value neither the restaurant itself nor the convenience of the business in that location, then perhaps there is a better use for this property. Another interesting observation gathered while conversing with the survey participants exposed an often emphatic approval of the business itself. Although many of the participants were not patrons of Lambert's Barbecue, those familiar with the establishment eagerly described their dining experiences as impressive events. Responses to the first question in this section reflect this opinion – four of the participants could find no suitable replacement for the site. These participants valued specific attributes of the site such as its restaurant menu to the degree that no other location would suit their needs.

The third set of questions revolved around specific attributes of an historic site and their ratings of importance in the participant's perspective. I read nine attributes and asked for a rating between one, least important, and five, most important, for the person when considering historic sites. Based on the twenty-five responses, the attributes ranked in the following order from least to greatest: consistency with the historic use of the building, tourism, consistency with



the surrounding land use, color, educational value, contribution to local history, preservation techniques, building materials, and architecture. The top three attributes, therefore, concerned the aesthetic of the building; the bottom three consisted of the choice of use for the building. Participants then offered suggestions of additional attributes of importance when considering historic sites. Few people offered new attributes; most reiterated the importance of one of the attributes listed in the survey. The most frequent submissions, education and information, seemed to fit within the attribute “educational value,” but this apparently held a different meaning to some participants. This potential discrepancy in interpretation, as well as some misunderstanding of the meaning of “preservation technique” lends credence to the suggestion of Loader and Zink that we lack a shared preservation terminology (1985). Other original attributes included aesthetic beauty and sustainability. These results suggest that determiners of value differ widely, and opportunity to propose additional attributes of importance should be provided in the measurement tool.

### Interviews

After contacting the City of Austin, the Texas Historical Commission, and the owners of Lambert’s Barbecue, we identified three key informants involved with each entity that would most likely possess knowledge of the redevelopment of the Schneider Building. Fred Evins, the contact for the City of Austin’s Second Street Retail District program, provided an interview response from the City’s perspective. The Texas Historical Commission’s involvement actually stemmed from the approval of the work done by the architect, Emily Little. Finally, Larry McGuire, executive chef and partial owner of Lambert’s Barbecue, answered the questions from the perspective of the business owner leasing the space in the historic Schneider Building. Together, these responses outlined the concerns of each entity to be included in the final product of this research.

Despite the typical fluidity of staff in local governments, the interviewee from the City of Austin had a long history as a city employee. Although Fred Evins did not hold his current position of Project Manager/Architect in the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office at the time of the acquisition through the outer restoration of the Schneider Building, his lengthy career at the City of Austin gave him valuable insight into the process behind the project. In addition, his role as the contact point for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Retail District allows him to comprehend, if not directly manage, the context in which the Schneider redevelopment exists today.

The City of Austin purchased the properties including the Schneider Building along the Colorado River (also called Town Lake, and more recently renamed Lady Bird Lake) in order to construct a municipal complex in 1979. The Schneider Building had already been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and as the years passed the structure desperately needed stabilization to remain standing. The City of Austin, as both landowner and local

government, held separate responsibilities regarding the historic designations of the building. The City as the governing municipality chose to implement historic zoning which is tied into the identification of the site as a local historic landmark, and the City as the landowner had the ability to nominate the property for recognition as an archaeological landmark as well. Many people gathered to make the redevelopment possible from the City's point of view. Key players included the Computer Science Corporation as the initial developer and lessee of the blocks, Emily Little as the consulting architect for the preservation, a development firm called Urban Partners originally hired by AMLI to aid in their redevelopment of the block just north of the Schneider Building, and the Texas Historical Commission. By utilizing a single retail developer to guide the redevelopment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street District, Evins stated that the overall concept of the area could be promulgated through careful selection of businesses interested in the space. This single vision of a cohesive district for "destination retail" led the development company to recommend Lambert's as a viable tenant for the Schneider Building. The exceptional qualities of Lambert's that earned the City's approval included confidence in the local owners, the strong promise of a return on any City investment, and the matching of the concept of a chic downtown restaurant. In large central business districts such as Austin's downtown, buildings of large scale often take on an affect of gigantic proportions; the space alienates pedestrians because of the lack of referential spaces with which an individual can engage. Design elements thus need to remain relevant to a human scale, in opposition to the surrounding high-rise buildings. Evins stressed the magnitude of the investment by the City of Austin, especially considering the potential of the building becoming something of a "money pit" throughout the completion of all required renovations to ensure its usability. In light of this, the most difficult portion of the project for the City involved the coordination of the funding with restoring the site. Taking a responsible stance as landowner, the City hoped to provide an example by actively supporting preservation of the community's historic resources.

The driving force behind the redevelopment, the concept of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Retail District, continues to thrive and encourage investment in the surrounding structures. Ground floor spaces continue to fill up, with high-end retail establishments making up the majority of tenants. Thus far, the retail investment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Retail District as a whole has exceeded the estimates initially put forward. The defining historic features of the structure, in Evins' opinion, included the architectural significance as well as the representation of a mercantile establishment from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The interior also holds impressive historic quality, including the wooden floor downstairs. As a long-time resident of the City of Austin, Evins enjoys the contribution of the Schneider Building to the local history in telling a piece of the story about the vaults, saloon, and other contributions to the City by the Schneider family.

Emily Little, of Clayton, Levy, and Little Architects in Austin, Texas, supervised the restoration of the exterior and provided consulting services for the

interior finish out of the Schneider Building. Little's interest in the structure began years ago, as the spot had been an eyesore for a long time, boarded up and painted over in one color. When the City Hall project began, the CSC hired architects PageSoutherlandPage who in turn hired Emily Little as a consultant for the exterior restoration of the Schneider Building. Little stated that the process involved with working on an historic property has many different and strict requirements. The people involved included the Texas Historical Commission (THC), PageSoutherlandPage and the CSC, and the City of Austin. The first step was to begin working with the THC, and their staff that is designated to handle these projects. When asked about the decision to restore the building to its original appearance, Little emphasized that the ideal situation would be to preserve the structure as close to its original condition as possible. In this instance, the Austin History Center kept an amazing photograph of the building's original state. This photograph was in her opinion the most incredible reference to be hoped for, and resulted in the renewed appearance of the sign on the east wall reading "J.P. Schneider & Bros". Little utilized the services of Patrick Sparks, an experienced forensic structural engineer, in order to diagnose the ailments of this historic building through extensive onsite analysis. Sparks conducted tests in order to determine the structural integrity of the building, including drilling the bearing points of each floor joint to ensure the wood was sound and had not decayed. Because of the differences in historic methods of construction, Little described Sparks' role as "instrumental" in the understanding of the current situation of the building and the work required to bring it up to code. The interior designer, Laurie Smith, worked with Little and Sparks to improve the building's standards to meet City code as well as the THC requirements involved with the addition of an additional staircase. Conclusively, the most challenging portion of the project presented itself in the budget. The requirements set by the THC offered complications that had feasible solutions, but the monetary restrictions originally set by the CSC proved the most difficult piece of the project.

Little's opinion regarding the project results reflected an exceptionally satisfied stakeholder. The building fits into the surrounding built environment "fabulously." The key ingredient is the local limestone of the bordering buildings, the impressive aesthetic of which PageSoutherlandPage appreciated and therefore included in their design. A combination of City code and THC approval dictated a bit of "grace space" required between the buildings. Little considers two elements paramount in defining the historical integrity of the building. First, the load-bearing brick construction provides a unique and pleasing aesthetic. Second, the notable location and specific use of the building created a common stopping point for travelers from the south. In Little's eyes, the new life of this building is a perfect fit.

Lambert's creators originally acquired an interest in the Schneider Building because of its compatibility with his restaurant concept. The owners looked to establish a Texas roadhouse, offering steak and live music in a downtown

Austin location. In fact, at the time the search for a site began the Schneider Building had not yet entered the real estate market, but after being introduced to the location McGuire said they felt it would be a good fit. Aware of the historical designation of the building, McGuire anticipated that eventually the project would require more time and money than a traditional restaurant. When they entered into the project, the outer part of the building had been completely restored, as well as the back inside staircase. Working with Laurie Smith of Laurie Smith Design Associates, Emily Little, and the THC, the team created an entirely new and modernized interior. McGuire described the intentions of the interior renovations as concept-driven. Utilizing recycled materials from other buildings and locally built custom furniture, the room acquired a rustic feel highlighted by modern European light fixtures. Matching the requirements of the City code and the THC became both expensive and time-consuming. From McGuire's perspective, the concerns of the THC became so impractical, and the approval process so intense, that the lack of follow-through with the project was both surprising and disappointing. Especially frustrating, the THC approval process seemed extremely objective, forcing the project to inevitably slow its progress and add more expense as the difficulties in restoration requirements rose.

McGuire expressed strong attitudes toward both the process of redeveloping the Schneider Building and the resulting adaptive reuse. He chose the phrase "juxtaposition of scale" to describe the building's redefined place in the surrounding built environment. The only structure built at a human scale, the Schneider Building offered a unique spot for the restaurant as well as an important structural variance in the downtown landscape. The adaptive reuse of the building represents a victorious clash with the emerging infiltration of chain restaurants in downtown Austin. McGuire also appreciated the return of the use of the building to a meeting place, incorporating food, drinks, and live music to capture both a local and visiting audience, just as the Schneider Building brought together local commerce and travelers. The façade of the building captures the historical integrity for McGuire, including the rooftop parapets, windows, and woodwork preserved in the structure. From a fiscal perspective, the business investment has been a big success, leaving McGuire to only wish he had been able to spend more. The customers give great feedback regarding the redevelopment. The extensive time that the building spent unoccupied combined with the corner location provides an "allure" to visitors. The focus on long-term rehabilitation of the structure bestowed an investment on the community as well.

### **Measurement Tool**

The compilation of the intercept survey results and the three interviews with individual stakeholders produced a collection of questions for measuring potential value in an historic preservation project. The tool's design intended to allow for a parliamentary inquisition, a structured discussion regarding a pro-

posed adaptive reuse. We identified common themes from the data, as well as elements unique to specific stakeholders. Combining these interests and determiners of value, the measurement tool allows for participants to answer open-ended questions and stimulates the intellectual discourse to bring forward project-specific issues and community concerns. Projects can include this tool at any point in the development process through formal charrettes (Frug 1999, p. 162) or informal processes such as those evaluated by Jeffrey Hou and Isami Kinoshita (2007).

The surveys of the public contributed several interesting elements. The contradiction between the desire for a restaurant in the space and the idea of the loss of the restaurant being least concerning questions the public's understanding of the use of the space. More significantly, the public's identification of replacement locations (in the case that the site was lost) focused almost entirely on the current use of the building as a dining establishment. When compared with historic value identified as most significant aspect of the loss of the building the conflict illustrates a lack of acknowledgment of the preservation of an historic asset through the redevelopment of the building as a legitimate use in and of itself. Without valuing the building independently of its adaptive reuse, the public cannot appreciate the full worth of the historic preservation. Indeed, this discovery promotes the idea that this research purports: in order to fulfill its potential, an historic redevelopment project must warrant esteem from the perspectives of the various stakeholders in the community.

Focused on the financial and commercial potential of the project, the business owners and tenants of the building indicated some difficulties in the current process of adaptive reuse. Frustration with the perceived lack of consideration on the part of the historical commission, this stakeholder may choose to avoid participating in another historic preservation project because of the experience. Uncontrollable increases in budgetary requirements, lack of consistency between the restoration standards and local code requirements, and a feeling of abandonment post-completion combine to create a high probability of dissatisfaction on the part of the business owner. The research uncovered these practical issues and included them in the product so that business owners might be provided a more accurate, and perhaps positive, understanding of the process involved with their use of a preserved historic property.

Elements found in the data collected during the interview with City of Austin employee Fred Evins consist of two basic focal points: first, the stimulation of positive, long-term economic growth, and second the promulgation of a cohesive concept to help define a sense of place in the area. The first concern deals mostly with the financial aspects of the project, which coincides with the concerns of the business owner without being redundant. Rather than focusing on the specific financial success of the site, the city prefers to consider the financial success of the surrounding area and thus the community. This big picture perspective requires the city to make choices regarding the concept of the area that will promote long-term economic growth rather than short-term finan-

cial gains. This concept, the second important element identified through the interview, must be solidified and advocated by both the city and the community in order to succeed. In the case of the Schneider Building, the concept of “destination retail” in a pedestrian-friendly downtown district helped identify a beneficial use for the space that incorporated both the preservation of an historic asset as well as a lucrative investment opportunity for local business. The City evaluates the site based on the prospect of rational investment as well as concept-driven development that will contribute to the community’s economic growth as well as its sense of place.

### **Themes in Perception**

The most prevalent theme throughout the data collected, the aesthetic of the historic structure maintains a position of extraordinary importance in the evaluation of a preservation product. From the perspectives of all three interviewed stakeholders as well as the surveyed public, the visual impression given by the building is paramount in the initial evaluation. The unique involvement of the aesthetic in historic preservation is its significance not only in the results of the project, but also the preliminary attention given to the structure before preservation efforts began. A disconcerting implication of this distinctive characteristic of perceived value in historic properties is the propensity of a community to overlook historic assets because of their lack of a dominant architectural expression. However, the design of this research was not such that this circumstance could be further explored.

Another common interest of the stakeholders, financial success, took on several variations. The main difference of the perspectives was the scale on which the success was measured. For the business owner, the economic investment in the site succeeded if the business made a profit. On the other hand, the city viewed the occupancy of the building as financial success, allowing for the property to generate revenue, increase in value, and thus contribute to the local tax base (regardless of any tax credits available due to the historic designation of the site). A wider, community-based perspective includes the financial success of the surrounding area; in the case of the Schneider Building, this perspective considers the destination retail within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street District and the larger economic context of downtown Austin. This underscores the importance of the geographic perspective in considering historic preservation. Linking a building to the various scales in which it influences take a specific spatial way of thinking that should engender more geographers to be recognized as important consultants in these processes. Regardless of scale, the success of the project as an economic investment maintained an important role for all stakeholders.

### **Final Product**

Bringing together both the individual concerns of stakeholders as well as general themes found in the data, this research described identified determiners

of success and value while avoiding the application of limits and definitions to a situation. The results incorporated those elements that individual stakeholders identified as determiners of value for the redevelopment of an historic site, as well as those that emerged from the assessment of the success of the redevelopment of the Schneider Building.

The measurement tool relies on the participants to provide honest answers as well as respectful consideration of the various perspectives brought together. Without the cooperation of stakeholders, the value of the redevelopment of the historic structure remains somewhat elusive. The process demands the encouragement of community involvement. All parties can review the proposed questions carefully, and suggest the inclusion of additional questions to be taken into consideration. The recognition of the differences in perception within the community will help participants realize the importance of specific elements to one subpopulation may not hold the same magnitude in another, despite historic, geographic, or demographic similarities. Sense of place cannot be fully generalized lest the community lose its personality altogether. Based on this study, the measurement tool helps bridge the various voices in the public planning process and focus adaptive efforts on the most positive of outcomes. The adaptability of the tool allows for wider applicability, but only if the stakeholders choose to take on the responsibility of participating.

### Implications

The product of this study provided insight to the concerns of many different community members and the ways in which they value the reuse of historic structures. In considering these characteristics and mannerisms, it becomes apparent that space can be separated into classifications. Applying the ideas of Lefebvre to the valuation of redevelopments of historical site, his triad of conceived, perceived, and lived space seems to correspond appropriately with the identified elements of concern. Each piece of the triad is connected conceptually and literally; avoiding strict definitions and limitations, the resulting understanding of space and its valuation is holistic, inclusive, and intuitive. Contextually, the results of this study reveal the complexity of the perception of and suggest more areas for application as well as additional research questions to be considered.

Conceived space allows for people to apply ideas in a medium to represent ideology and knowledge (Lefebvre 1991). As found in this research, the creation of a concept for use in an area fits into this notion of space. A shared concept promotes understanding of common principles through an area. Perhaps, as in the instance of the Schneider Building redevelopment, when a cohesive plan is created and outlined in detail for a space, the end result predictably resembles the plan in some manner. Despite the limitations of a case study, one must consider the possibility that the identification of a common goal that utilized the site as both an historic asset and an economic investment helped to direct the outcomes in a positive manner.

Most closely associated with this work is the idea of perceived space, or spatial practice. Its elements include opposing forces that contend for domination. The balance of the reality of a person's activities and the design through which they function is observed through the contextually relevant actions of people (Grönlund 1999). The perceived space of the Schneider Building differed in the eyes of each surveyed and interviewed individual. An additional point made by Grönlund regarding Lefebvre's perceived space is the role of organizer played by a society in spatial practice. Society, perhaps, should be challenged by its members (Grönlund 1999), and the measurement tool allows for an open framework in which such discourse might proceed. Important to consider, however, is that the questionnaire is not designed to ensure success but merely to facilitate dialogue in a productive, holistic approach.

Finally, lived space emerges as something of a result of the combination of conceived and perceived space. This is not to say lived space is a product, nor that conceived and perceived space are merely an incomplete percentage of lived space – only that this is but one way in which lived space comes into existence (Grönlund 1999). In this light, one can consider the mindless, physical space through which people live and move to be a fascinating example of the contradictions and at the same time correlation of the concepts and perceptions of humans. Recognizing that the control of lived space is impossible, this research goes further and refrains from considering the aspiration of manipulating this space. The purpose of the questionnaire is not to alter the lived experience of the space, but to allow for the exploration of the different manifestations of space in a community. Although the research intends to promote the success of the redevelopment of historic sites, it does not purport to alter the end result but only to increase community involvement and allow for an organized start to a dialogue regarding the project.

### Conclusion

While historic preservation grows in popularity as a redevelopment strategy, the processes involved remain potentially time-consuming and expensive. Also, the success of a certain project often depends on architecture critics or preservationists, but the measurement tool described in this research gleans a more holistic perspective of the redevelopment process including stakeholders from the community, the municipality, and potential future owners or lessees. While this measurement tool has reflects qualities unique to the Austin case study, its wider implications encourage garnering more inclusion in broad urban development and redevelopment projects.

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