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37. HERITAGE & SUSTAINABILITY

The application of sustainable development principles to heritage is by no means a new concept. The methodological framework for measuring the environmental capacity of historic areas to accommodate growth has evolved in the past thirty years. The relationship between heritage and sustainability refers to the relationship between heritage, economic regeneration and identification with place. This powerful amalgamation of benefits has evolved under the umbrella of the four principal goals of sustainable development; social progress; environmental protection; prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of

high and stable levels of economic growth and performance. Thus, sustainability and conservation become the wise use of resources to ensure their continuity of supply, minimum intervention to fabric and cultural identity (physical, social, economic, artistic) as well as constructive evolution as opposed to destructive revolution. The past has always exerted an influence on the present. The historic city is one whose economy is largely dependent on tourism, is noted for its historic character and actively pursues the economic exploitation of its heritage through techniques of presentation and interpretation. Heritage

is concerned with the ways in which very selective material artefacts, mythologies, memories and traditions become resources for the present. Thus heritage is a selective part of the past which is only partially interpreted for present-day consumption. The concept of environmental capital allows key assets to be given relative weight in order to assist decision makers to simultaneously cultivate heritage and facilitate development within historic places.

Ref: Michael Stubbs - Planning, Practice & Research, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 285-305, August 2004.