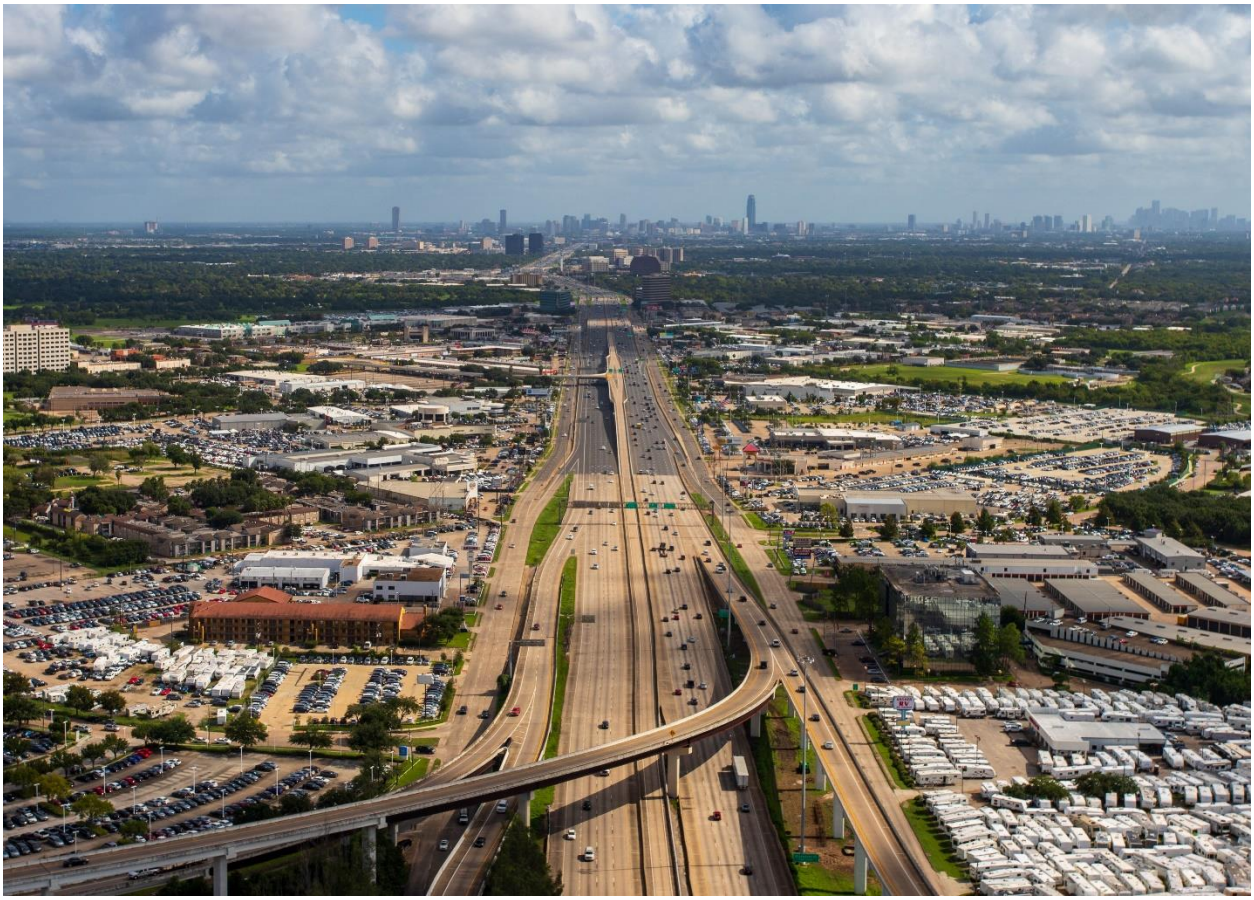
Appendix C - Cultural Resources Considerations in Flood Risk Management



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1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural resources and cultural heritage are terms used to describe the places, objects, stories, and rituals that help to define us as individuals, as communities, as a nation, and as a species. From a planning perspective, cultural heritage has been identified as a key component of community resilience; it is the sense of place that lets people know they're "home", brings visitors from far away, and binds individuals together in a disaster.

The importance of cultural resources in planning for flood risk management becomes even more clear when one considers the vital link between humans and water. For over 11,500 years, people have made their homes in and around the waterways of southeast Texas, leaving material evidence in the form of archaeological sites, historic objects, structures, and landscapes. People have also left intangible evidence in the form of language, rituals, culinary traditions, and economic systems, to name a few.

Unfortunately, Greater Houston has already lost many of its precontact and historic age resources to urban and industrial development, flooding, preservation bias, and neglect. For many historically marginalized communities, their significant historic resources are concentrated in high risk areas and may feature poorer construction. As a result, deterioration and demolition have occurred more rapidly, further erasing their important contributions to the region. These impacts can easily be compounded by flood control projects, which are meant to reduce risk in cultural resource-rich environments, but have tended to focus on protecting higher value real estate, and often fail to identify cultural resources during project planning, or to account for the economic and social benefits of cultural resources. This leads to an overall loss of heritage community resilience, which is the way a community builds its capacity to anticipate and adapt to the stressors encountered during a disaster (Fabbricattie et. al 2020).

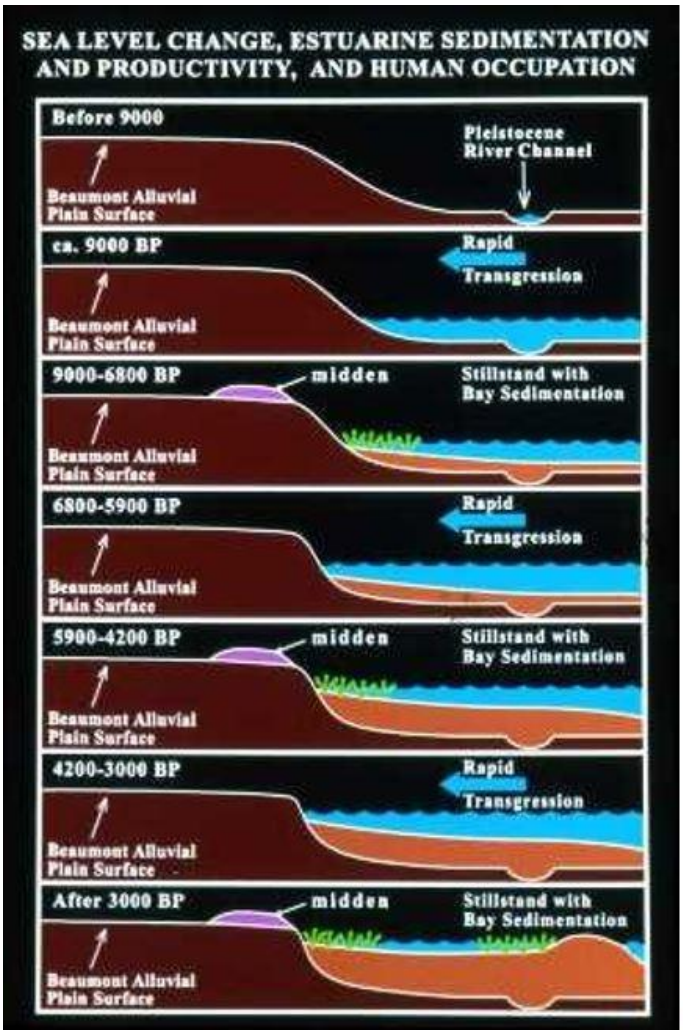
Figure 1 - Freedmen's Town, Houston, Texas, 2014 by Patrick Feller (left) (CC BY 2.0), and in 2021 (right)

This Appendix to the Metropolitan Houston Watershed Assessment is provided to explore opportunities related to the consideration of cultural resources in flood risk management efforts. A necessary first step is to look at examples of significant cultural resources in the study area, as well as events, federal policies, and practices that have contributed to their loss over time. Recommendations to improve the identification of underrepresented cultural resources and the assessment of economic and other social benefits in keeping with United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) planning guidance are provided. In addition to specific consultation and preservation methods, a more holistic assessment of socioeconomic impacts and cultural resources is recommended to identify significant cultural resources and maximize economic benefits and heritage community resilience through flood risk management.

1.1. Cultural Resources Considerations in Greater Houston

1.1.1. Precontact Era Resources

The archaeological record of southeast Texas indicates Native Americans have lived in this region for over 11,500 years, beginning with mobile hunter gatherers of the Clovis, San Patrice, and Scottsbluff toolmaking traditions (Ricklis 2004). Sea level rise between 10,000 and 3,000 years ago submerged many archaeological sites dating to the Paleolithic and Archaic Periods. Steady development of the prairies to suit agricultural and industrial practices, channelization of the bayous, and expansive urban growth have continued to impact cultural resources. Despite these impacts, hundreds of archeological sites have been recorded along the bayous and back channels of the greater Houston area. Through use of modern techniques like geoarchaeological and botanical analyses, these sites have the potential to offer great insight on how past peoples lived with water, but many of them are at risk from rapid suburban expansion, flooding, and erosion.



Clovis point from McFadden Beach, upper Texas coast. Photo by Thomas J. Hester (above). Gulf Coast estuary evolution sequence showing altered shoreline structure and Native subsistence patterns during the Holocene period. Graphic by Ricklis and Blum (left)

1.1.2. HISTORIC ERA RESOURCES

The first Native Texans to have contact with European explorers were the Karankawa, who in 1527 lived along the central Gulf Coast in independent tribes, practicing seasonal migration and subsisting primarily on fish, shellfish, and plants, including pecans, prickly pear, and cattail roots (La Vere 2004). French and Spanish settlements were originally concentrated around the mouth of the Trinity River, with Anglo and Mexican settlements gradually expanding throughout the region following the Mexican War of Independence and the Texas Revolution. By the mid-1800s, the Karankawa had been decimated by disease, as well as by conflicts with Euro-Americans and the Comanche. The Alabama-Coushatta, who arrived in east Texas in the 1780s, fought against Spanish rule, and assisted Sam Houston's army to gain independence from Mexico, settled permanently around the Sabine and Neches Rivers, where their reservation remains today. African Americans, who were not free in Texas until 1865, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, quickly established urban and rural settlements, as well as churches, fraternal organizations, businesses, and political committees

(Barr 1973). Remnants of these settlements can be found throughout the study area, though many suffer from neglect.

Figure 2 - Mt. Sinai Grand Lodge & Star of Faith Grand Chapter, Houston, Texas

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought rapid changes to the upper Texas gulf. Development of the oil and gas industries and the Houston Ship Channel attracted more industry, as did the Johnson Space Center. In 1975, Houston was designated as a resettlement location by the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, which brought thousands of Vietnamese immigrants fleeing the war on communism. More than 400 families were relocated to the Allen Parkway Village, which was built in 1944 in the historically black Fourth Ward. Originally called San Felipe Courts, the housing project was built for low income whites and was desegregated in 1964 (Fox 1987). Today, Harris County is home to approximately 4.7 million people, with 45% of Hispanic/Latino descent, and was recently rated by WalletHub as the most diverse city in America based on metrics of socioeconomic, cultural, economic, household, and religious diversity (U.S. Census Bureau 2019; McCann 2021).

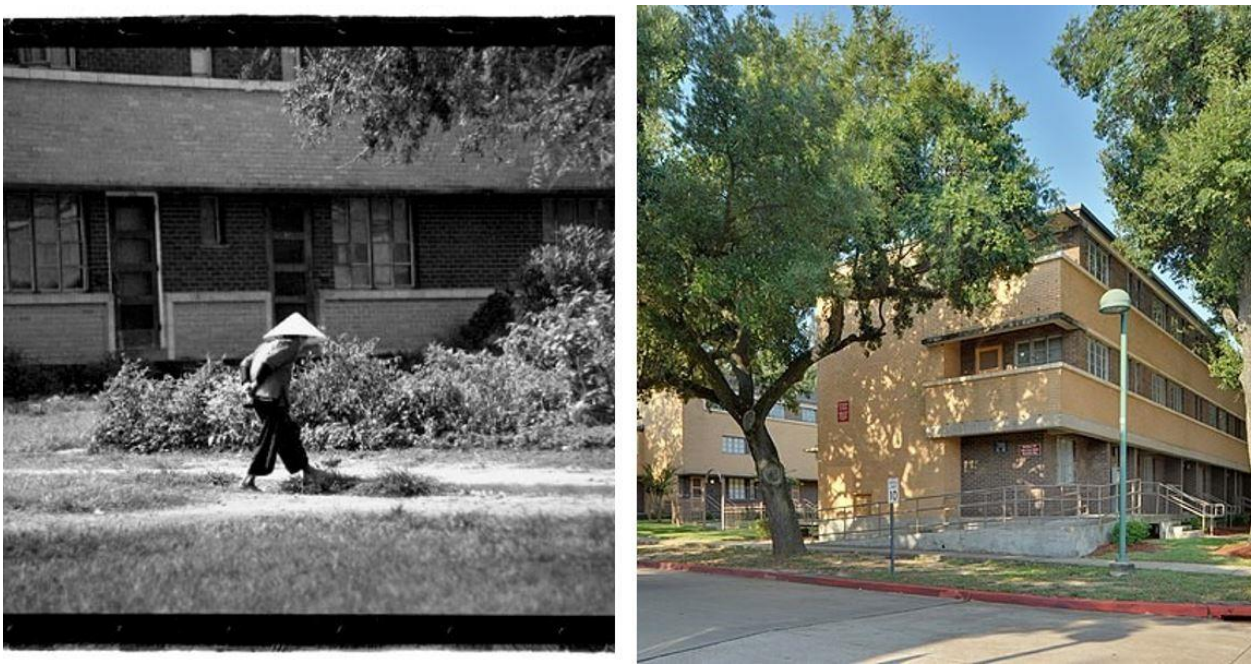


Figure 3 - Vietnamese woman walking in front of Allen Parkway Village, 1970s (left) and Allen Parkway Village in 2010 (right) (Photos courtesy of Houston Institute for Culture and CC BY 3.0)

1.2. HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Increasing attention is being paid to the Eurocentric nature and timing of historic and cultural resource identification. The National Park Service's Telling All Americans' Stories initiative and the recent designation of the Stonewall Inn as a National Historic Landmark are excellent example of how recent designations of cultural resources have recognized culturally significant movements and events that were not considered in earlier years under a different lens of significance. Like many cities across the U.S., most historic properties and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for Harris and the surrounding counties are representative of Euro-American architecture and heritage, despite the rich heritage and cultural diversity of the region.

Of the 336 historic properties and districts listed in Harris County, 16 are associated with African American heritage, 2 are associated with Hispanic heritage, 2 are associated with women's heritage, and 1 is associated with Jewish heritage. Tejano and Hispanic heritage, while widely understood as integral to Houston's identity, is not well captured or celebrated in the NRHP for Harris County. In contrast, there are no NRHP-listed buildings or districts representing the Native American, Asian American, LGBTQ, or labor history of Greater Houston, though these resources certainly exist. Houston's first gay community center "Gaze", which opened in 1972 at 504 Fairview Street in the Montrose neighborhood is just one example of a historic structure with a rich, underrepresented story to tell. While the public's interest in understanding and preserving these legacies has grown immensely, the lack of adequate historic contexts and the purposeful erasure of painful or conflicting parts of our heritage make it difficult to identify the resources associated with them, adding greatly to their risk of loss.

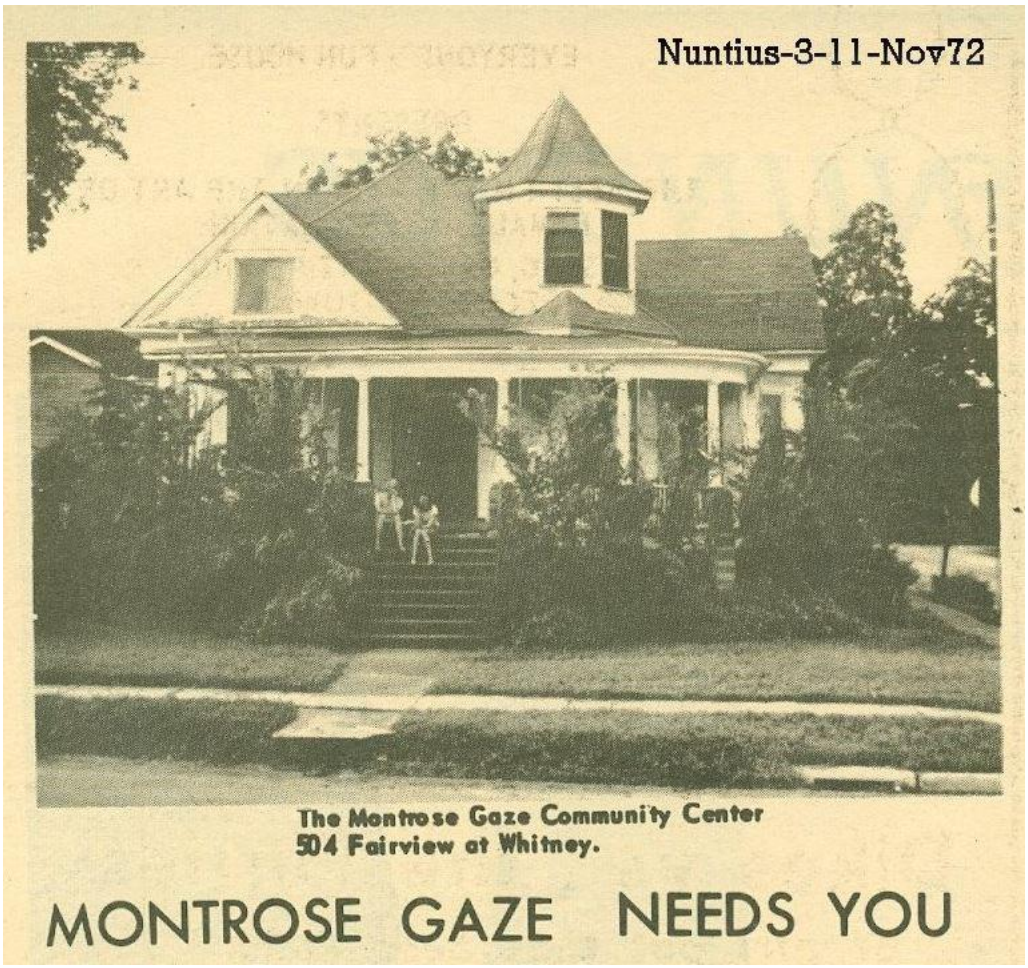


Figure 4 - Montrose Gaze Community Center, pictured in The Nuntius, Houston's first LGBT newspaper. (Photo courtesy of houstonlgbthistory.org)

Perhaps an even greater concern than preservation bias is the issue of bias in infrastructure placement, which has been shown in numerous studies to disproportionately affect minorities and economically vulnerable populations (Checker 2005, Johnson et. al 2014). In flood risk management, this bias often stems from an overemphasis on economic benefits in the form of improved property values.

The map below uses three data sets to demonstrate how basing flood risk management projects around depreciated replacement cost, which varies with property value, compounds problems of institutional inequality rooted in federal housing policies of the New Deal Era. The first pattern to observe is that NRHP-listed properties and districts are concentrated in the downtown commercial district, properties historically owned by affluent whites, and in residential areas where median income is over $50,000 per year. Second, we see that the residential areas with higher median incomes and more NRHP-listed properties are in locations coded in 1937 as "Best" and "Still Desirable" by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which graded neighborhoods across the country using racial demographics as a determinant (Hiller 2003). Areas coded as "Definitely Declining" or "Hazardous" in 1937 have a comparatively low median income and few, if any, historic properties listed on the NRHP, with the exception of Greater Heights and Freedmans Town. Both of these neighborhoods are now populated primarily by

white residents, with Greater Heights retaining a much higher degree of historic integrity and Freedman's Town being slowly demolished and replaced by townhouses and multifamily residences.

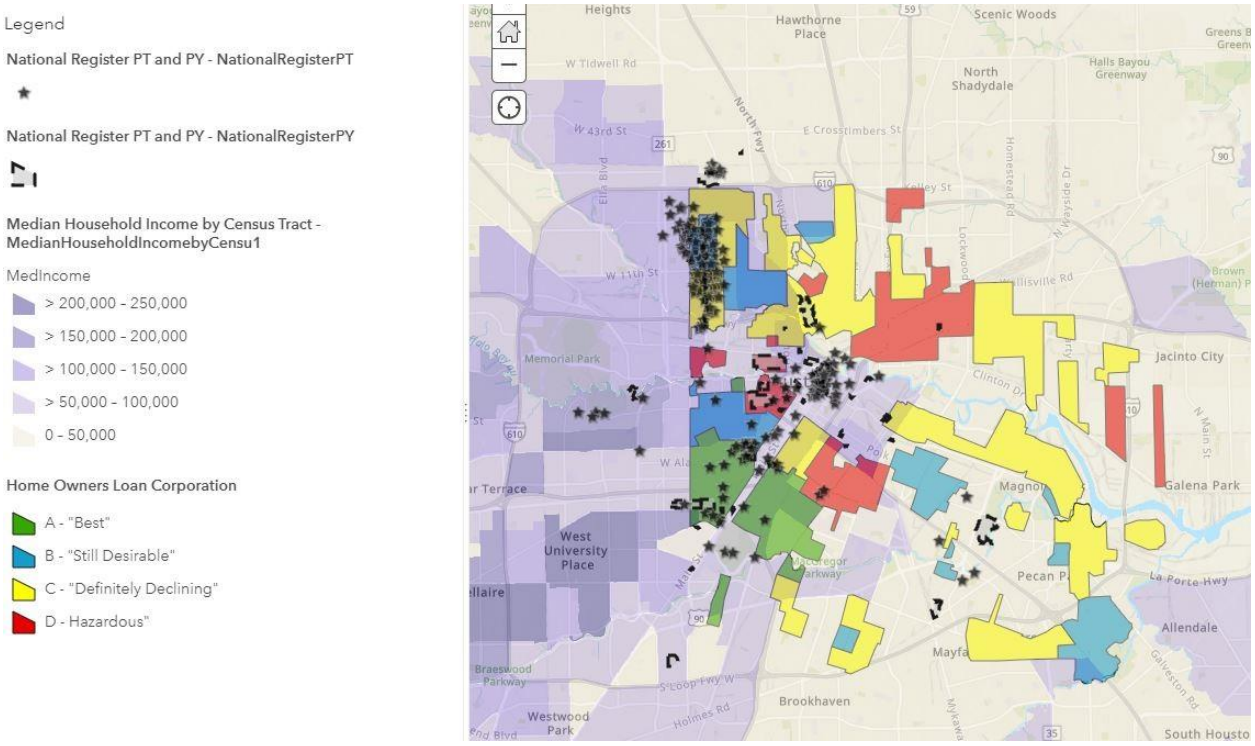


Figure 5 - NRHP-listed properties and districts are highly correlated with positive HOLC grades and high median incomes

Systematic undervaluing of real estate in dense minority neighborhoods, along with neglect by civic leaders and investors, has led to cycles of blight and gentrification, so that many historic lower income and minority enclaves have been fragmented and displaced. When agencies like the USACE are called to do flood risk management projects, structural measures in these communities are often quickly screened from consideration when the depreciated replacement cost and content loss are too low to allow the project to maximize net benefits. Cost benefit analysis is important when spending taxpayer dollars but it is also important to remember that property value is not a factor devoid of history or politics, and when we make flood risk management decisions based primarily on property value, we are not only out of compliance with USACE regulations (ER 1105-2-100), we are very likely compounding problems of systemic racism by allowing marginalized groups to suffer disproportional flood risk and financial loss.

A third concern is the timing in which cultural resources consideration takes place. Plan formulation steps require problem identification, setting goals and objectives and applying metrics to measure how the alternatives demonstrate that the measure has met the objectives. Generally, the objectives and metrics are limited to function and impacts measured in dollars. Subsequent considerations consider impacts of the plan that has been identified as most cost effective. Rather than being seen as an opportunity to maximize project benefits, cultural resources are often considered as an afterthought, or worse, as a barrier to economic development. Whether at a local or federal level, the delay of consultation with heritage

communities and identification of resources significantly increases the risk of adverse effects. Under USACE SMART Planning, programmatic agreements are often used during the feasibility phase to demonstrate compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), leaving the identification of resources to the design phase. Under these circumstances, impacts to cultural resources located in the project area become nearly unavoidable. Consulting with all possible interested parties during the feasibility phase helps improve the likelihood that significant and/or underrepresented heritage resources will be identified and that resolution of effects to those resources can occur with minimal conflict or impact to the design schedule and budget. A targeted approach to consultation can also help to address knowledge gaps inherent in professional historic preservation, which has generally been dominated by people of European descent.

Consultation with stakeholders and the public is a cornerstone of the NHPA and its enacting regulations but relying solely on the NHPA can lead to overlooked resources. In order to qualify for listing on the NRHP, a resource must be at least 50 years of age and associated with significant events, persons, architectural styles, or have potential to reveal information about past human lifeways, as is the case with many archaeological sites. While the NHPA does consider impacts to intangible resources like historic viewsheds, and to exceptionally significant resources less than 50 years of age, it relies heavily on the National Park Service Criteria of Significance and does not provide as much latitude for the definition of significant cultural resources like the creole heritage of Kashmere Gardens, whose significant resources have been systematically destroyed by freeway construction and toxic chemical waste (Ernst 2021), or modern cultural landscapes like Bellaire's New Chinatown, which is the heart of an historically underrepresented community and is located in a high flood risk area. For adequate consideration of these resources, we are better off turning to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which allows preservation practitioners to determine what resources are significant based on their own professional judgement and stakeholder input.

Planning for Heritage Community Resilience

Fabbricattie et. al (2020) have identified six attributes for heritage community resilience, all of which can be facilitated by the consideration and protection of cultural resources:

1. Knowledge, skills, and learning
2. Community networks
3. People-place connection
4. Community infrastructure
5. Diverse and innovative economy
6. Engaged governance

The first step in planning for heritage community resilience in flood risk management is to identify significant cultural resources within your area of interest. In the previous sections, we looked at some of the challenges associated with identifying these resources throughout the many communities of the greater Houston area. In order to overcome these challenges, individuals and agencies working in flood risk management should consider hiring one or more cultural resources professionals meeting the professional qualification standards of the Secretary of the Interior to do the following:

- Consult with individuals, neighborhood associations, local historical societies, scholars, and other agencies to identify important resources, risks, and opportunities. Particular attention should be paid to underrepresented communities, as well as resources that are nearing 50 years of age.
- Develop an inventory strategy that addresses resources in both rural and urban contexts, using a variety of archaeological and ethnographic methods to explore seasonal, climate, and other behavioral patterns of past peoples.
- Conduct cultural resources surveys using the NRHP criteria as well as additional criteria for significance as determined appropriate in consultation with stakeholders under NEPA. Intangible resources including foodways, dance, and other cultural artforms should be considered.
- Write historic contexts addressing regionally significant themes like fossil fuel and industrial development, plantation economy of the Texas Gulf Coast, and communism, the "space race", and refugee resettlement, among others.
- Ensure that projects are carried out in compliance with the Antiquities Code of Texas, which applies to all Texas State agencies and subsidiaries, including Harris County.
- Coordinate with the City of Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission to identify and minimize impacts to known historic resources.

The next step in achieving heritage community resilience is to ensure adequate consideration of economic and other benefits associated with historic properties and other cultural resources, in keeping with ER 1105-2-100 and the USACE January 5, 2021 Policy Directive requiring comprehensive documentation of benefits in decision documents.

In addition to consulting early with diverse stakeholders to understand the social value of cultural resources with a study area, we also need a better understanding of the economic benefits and losses associated with preserving and/or demolishing historic structures and how intangible resources may also affect local economies.

Currently, replacement cost does not take into consideration the cost of demolition, design improvements necessary to conform to new codes, debris removal, site accessibility, reuse of materials, overtime, or other various contingencies that can occur in construction. In historic preservation, this is referred to as a loss of embodied energy, which includes all of the energy used to during the original construction of a historic structure, from extraction of raw materials, through transportation, manufacture, use, and end of life/disposal. A newly constructed mixed use building takes anywhere from 40-80 years to overcome the negative environmental impacts of construction, versus the rehabilitation and retrofitting of an existing historic structure, which maintains its embodied energy while contributing to the transmission of historical knowledge and people-place connections (Urban Collaborative 2020).

Loss of embodied energy is just one economic factor to consider; others that should be measured include:

- Job creation and income generated by historic rehabilitation
- Property value trends inside and outside of historic districts
- Revenues generated by heritage tourism, direct and indirect

- Environmental impacts including contribution of preservation to local plans for sustainable and/or “green” community planning
- Revitalization of commercial districts
- Tax credits to investor as well as individual households

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s 2011 Report Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation and the Texas Historical Commission’s 2015 Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Texas recommend metrics to measure each factor. For example, to measure the environmental component, one should consider reduction in land fill refuse, savings in infrastructure, loss of embodied energy, reduced vehicle miles related to construction, and unimpacted green acreage on existing sites. These factors would be measured in addition to any environmental benefits created by retrofitting, upgrade of systems, or ecological improvements that may be integrated. Existing economic modeling systems such as RIMS II – the Regional Input-Output Modeling System and PEIM – the Preservation Economic Impact Model can be used to conduct these analyses.

The economic and social value of intangible resources are also important to consider but often overlooked. A good example to illustrate the value of intangible resources is the Hawaiian hula. Outlawed for decades under colonialism, this dance embodies the Hawaiian spirit of aloha and the people’s connection to the land, sea, and spirit worlds. Today, the hula is a primary attraction for tourists visiting Hawaii; its value is multidimensional for the people who practice it and the people who market it as an attraction. In this example, one can easily see how any infrastructure project which might impact a hula halau (school), a sacred place where Hula is performed, or even a hotel venue where tourists come to enjoy the luau food and culture, must take the multidimensional value of hula into account.

Once significant intangible resources are identified, solutions for avoiding and minimizing impact to these resources can be sought. This may be as simple as maintaining walkable corridors within and between neighborhoods, or in large scale projects, could include places and programs for the preservation of languages and other significant, intangible resources as a form of mitigation.

1.3. PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES IN FLOOD ZONES

When it comes to historic structures and infrastructure, the National Park Service (NPS) has developed Guidelines on Flood Adaptation and Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which includes recommendations for temporary protection, site and landscape adaptations, dry and wet floodproofing, elevating historic structures, and more. Once historic properties are identified and their flood vulnerability is assessed, the selection of adaptation measures will need to be evaluated for impacts to the character defining features of the property. The tables below are just a few excerpts from the NPS Guidelines, which are available online at https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/flood-adaptation-guidelines.pdf.

Table 1 - Temporary Protective Measures

Recommended	Not Recommended
Evaluating and ensuring the ability of masonry walls and temporary flood barriers to withstand the forces of flooding and reinforcing walls as necessary.	Reinforcing masonry walls to withstand the forces of flooding in a manner that destroys historic materials and features or diminishes the historic character of the property.
Providing sufficient clearance between the temporary barrier and the walls of a historic structure to ensure that the force of the water against the barrier is not transferred to the historic building.	Erecting temporary barriers that are in direct contact with any significant historic building, structure, or object on the site.
Installing pumps to remove water as well as backup generator in a floodproof space.	Selecting a system or equipment inadequate to protect the historic building from predicted flooding and/or cannot be deployed quickly.

Table 2 - Site and Landscape Adaptations

Recommended	Not Recommended
Surveying and documenting areas where the terrain will be altered or new features constructed to determine the potential impact to important landscape features, archeological resources, other cultural or religious features, or burial grounds.	Failing to survey the building site prior to beginning work, which may result in damage or loss of important landscape features, archeological resources, other cultural or religious features, or burial grounds.
Protecting and maintaining buildings, site, and landscape features by providing proper drainage to ensure that water does not erode foundation walls, drain toward the building, or damage or erode the landscape.	Failing to ensure that site drainage is adequate so that buildings and site features are damaged or destroyed. Changing the site grading so that water does not drain properly or is redirected toward other buildings or structures.
Designing new or improving existing stormwater management systems, such as cisterns, bio-swales, permeable pavers, and green roofs to reduce surface floods and reverse-flow flooding.	Damaging or destroying historic materials, features, or spaces of the historic building, site, and setting in order to add or improve storm-water management.

Recommended	Not Recommended
Constructing a levee, berm, or embankment on adjacent or nearby land outside the historic site or district to minimize impacts to the character of the historic property and increase area of protection for the historic site or district	Damaging or destroying important landscape features, archeological resources, other cultural or religious features, or burial grounds in order to construct the flood protection.
Ensuring that the new or modified floodwall or berm is compatible with the historic character of the property.	Constructing a tall floodwall or berm that is incompatible with the historic character of the site or setting that blocks the historic

Table 3 - Dry Floodproofing

Recommended	Not Recommended
Evaluating the strength of masonry walls and footings of historic buildings to ensure that they are strong enough to withstand floodwater pressure and flood-borne debris.	Proceeding with dry floodproofing without assessing the structural stability of the historic building.
Preparing to effectively manage the incoming floodwaters and addressing moving and removing the water from the site and historic building after the flooding.	Failing to maintain a waterproof coating or membrane after it has been applied.
Installing required vents in foundation walls that can be sealed in the event of flooding.	Blocking character-defining openings permanently in a nonreversible manner.

Table 4 - Wet Floodproofing

Recommended	Not Recommended
Anchoring the structure, where necessary, to prevent movement or collapse of the historic building.	Altering visible foundation walls to an extent that the historic character of a building is affected.
Relocating all utilities above the established flood risk level or protecting them in place with a watertight or impermeable enclosure.	Relocating systems and utilities to a historically significant interior space or a highly visible location.
Following the recommended structural engineering guidance for the number, size, and placement of hydrostatic flood vents, as well as any other ventilation requirements.	Ignoring industry standards for flood venting requirements resulting in the loss of structural

Recommended	Not Recommended
	stability of the building in a flood event.
Using substitute materials that are more flood-damage resistant when replacing deteriorated or destroyed historic materials and features that are compatible with the historic character of the building. Replacing character-defining features with a substitute material that matches the design and appearance of the historic component	Selecting flood-damage resistant replacement materials and features that are potentially destructive or incompatible with the historic building.
Using the gentlest means possible for effectively removing surface grime and killing flood-borne bacteria. This can include a low-pressure water wash and appropriate cleaners.	Using abrasive materials or methods to clean the flood-impacted building.
Allowing all the materials that were submerged or in contact with the flood waters to properly dry using dehumidifiers and fans before repairing the building.	Accelerating or force drying the building with heat in order to expedite repair of the damaged building.

Table 5 - Elevating Historic Structures

Recommended	Not Recommended
Identifying, retaining, and preserving materials and features of the building that are important in defining its overall historic character before elevating the building.	Elevating a building that was specifically designed to connect to or interact with the landscape without also planning how to retain this spatial relationship, such as buildings with interior spaces that open onto a terrace or outdoor courtyard.
Documenting the building in photographs and/or drawings, particularly any features that may be lost or altered, prior to beginning work.	Designing a new foundation that is too tall, so that its size and scale are out of proportion to the historic building and, thus, diminish its character.
Repairing any structural deficiencies, such as rotten sill plates and termite damage, before beginning work to separate the building from the existing foundation	Lifting a building from its foundation without first conducting a thorough inspection and repairing any identified structural issues.

1.4. CONSULTATION AND COMPLIANCE

The Metropolitan Houston Watershed Assessment has been conducted using federal funds and is therefore an undertaking under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Because no specific flood risk alternatives are being considered, the study has no potential to affect cultural resources and no Section 106 consultation is required. During the study initiation, the following federally recognized tribes, state, and federal agencies were contacted to determine their interest in the study: the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, the Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas General Land Office, Texas Water Development Board, Texas Parks and Wildlife Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Park Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. No responses regarding cultural resources were received from any of the tribes or agencies contacted.

Because the study has no potential to affect cultural resources, and because tribal nations and other federal and state agencies must reply to a high volume of requests for consultation, it is possible that the tribes and agencies contacted were not able to respond to USACE correspondence. Additional consultation with these groups, as well as local neighborhood organizations and historical societies is recommended upon completion of the draft report and for any future flood risk management studies in the metropolitan Houston area.

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