

Overcoming Economic Blind Spots in Adaptive Reuse: A Strategic Framework Illustrated through New Zealand Cases

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Abstract:

Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is increasingly recognized as a key strategy for sustainable urban development. Existing frameworks often consider political, social, cultural, architectural, and environmental factors but frequently overlook detailed economic analysis. This gap can lead to suboptimal reuse decisions, financial inefficiency, and reduced long-term sustainability of heritage projects.

This paper addresses these shortcomings by developing an enhanced adaptive reuse framework integrating a broader economic perspective, exploring alternative reuse options to achieve more sustainable outcomes. The framework emphasizes opportunity costs, economic networks, and sectoral influences, supporting informed decision-making that aligns heritage conservation with urban development strategies.

Auckland, New Zealand, serves as the case study. Despite being relatively young compared to ancient cities, it possesses historical dimensions rooted in Māori heritage alongside modern developments. Its simpler urban pattern and strategic plans provide a suitable context to investigate adaptive approaches without the complexities of older centers. The methodology involves qualitative analysis of existing adaptive reuse case studies, focusing on economic factors. Policy documents such as the Auckland 2050 Plan, sectoral economic data, and economic interdependencies were reviewed. Special attention was given to Building One, analyzing how economic considerations influence outcomes and identifying key factors affecting project effectiveness.

Findings indicate that embedding robust economic analysis—including opportunity costs, economic linkages, and sector-specific contributions—enhances competitiveness, viability, and sustainability. The refined framework adopts a multi-layered top-down approach, starting with governmental and economic contexts, moving through social and cultural considerations, and culminating in urban and architectural interventions, ensuring heritage assets actively contribute to the city's evolving economy.

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