

2004 REP Grant

Visualizing change: Nantucket Island, Massachusetts 1950s – present: A multimedia historical GIS

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Summary of results

This project had three main objectives:

1. To build a multimedia historical GIS of Nantucket, Massachusetts 1950-2000;
2. To study the historical geography of the island, with specific emphasis on the relationship between historic preservation, nature conservation, and housing;
3. To study this relationship at different spatial scales, ranging from the single house to the neighborhood to the entire island, and analyze and explain these spatial differences.

All these objectives were met. A multimedia GIS has been built over the course of the past nine months. Also, we are currently creating a website for disseminating the results of the project. The website is a companion to a paper currently under preparation. The island of Nantucket was chosen for the project because it is a prime example of the planned creation (starting in the 1950s) by a restricted group of individuals of a high-end tourist resort. Also, Nantucket has a long tradition of historic preservation and nature conservation. Together, these factors are pushing life residents—unable to afford the cost of housing—out of the island. A multimedia GIS is the ideal tool to study how Nantucket spatial dynamics have changed from the 1950s and how these dynamics play out at different scales. Finally, this project is an example of building a GIS database with the explicit purpose of studying and trying to explain the historical geography of a place. Traditionally, historical geographers and historians do not use GIS in their work.

Publications

- I am in the final stage of preparation of a paper presenting the results of my work on Nantucket. The paper is tentatively titled “A tale of Three Scales: Nantucket, 1950-2000” and will be submitted to either *Social Science History* or *Historical Geography* by the end of July 2005.

Conference presentations

- Alberto Giordano, Alexis Buckley, *Visualizing Change: Tourism, Real Estate, and Housing Affordability in Nantucket, Massachusetts 1950-2000*, Social Science History Association (SSHA) Annual Conference, Chicago, 18-21 November, 2004.

- Alberto Giordano, Alexis Buckley, *Towards Historical GIS: Issue in the Design and Implementation of a GIS for Nantucket, Massachusetts 1950-2000*, North American Cartographic Information Society (NACIS) Annual Meeting, Portland (ME), 6-9 October, 2004.
- Buckley, A. *Visualizing Historical Geographic Change Over Time: Nantucket, MA 1950-2000*, New England Historical Association (NEHA) Annual Conference, Weston (MA), 16 April 2005.

Other results

- A website presenting an historical GIS (Geographic Information System) for Nantucket 1950-2000 is currently under development and will be completed by the end of July 2005. The website is a companion to the paper described above.
- Alexis Buckley wrote her MS thesis based on work we did on Nantucket for my REP grant. The title of the thesis is: Visualizing Historic Geographic Change over Time: Constructing an Historical GIS – Nantucket, Massachusetts 1950-2000. Alexis graduated from the Department of Geography in May 2005.

Current support

- I was awarded another REP grant for 2005 to continue the work started last year in Nantucket. The title of the 2005 project is: “A Conceptual Model for Using GIScience and GITechnologies to Interpret Spatial Change: Nantucket Island, Massachusetts 1950s – present.” Future grants may be submitted elsewhere depending on the results of the two REP grants awarded so far.