

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: PRESERVING INTAGIBLE AND TRADITIONAL  
CULTURAL HERITAGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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This thesis explores a supposition that intangible and traditional cultural heritage should be preserved and enhanced at the local level of government, primarily through a preservation planning process. By incorporating such resources within the context of preservation planning, the intangible aspects of a community that contribute to the overall character can be used as a guiding principle in qualifying the outcome of the community's future. Utilizing documentation tools and models that exist at a national and international level, namely the Traditional Cultural Property listing through the National Park Service and UNESCO's emphasis on intangible culture, the legitimacy and framework to evaluate these resources is substantiated. The dynamic nature of intangible culture is evaluated through an ethnographic lens, emphasizing people and cultural values when determining significance. Two case studies highlighting the Greek heritage of

Tarpon Springs and the Cuban Exile experience in Little Havana demonstrate the compelling part intangible cultural heritage plays in shaping these Florida communities.

Problematic variables such as the many forces of acculturation and general type constraints of dealing with such fluid resources were weighed carefully in order to draw practical conclusions. The sum of these recommendations is a step in the direction toward a more comprehensive approach to cultural resource protection for local governments, acknowledging interdependence between the physical and intangible qualities that contribute to community character. This provocative, emerging topic in the field of historic preservation demonstrates the intellectual challenges presented when inserting a government role in cultural expression. For this reason, a basic principle to take away from this study is that local governments can and should proactively acknowledge traditional culture, then, stay out of its way. Whether and how local governments amass the political will to intervene on behalf of cultural heritage is best left for communities to decide which preservation strategy is appropriate. Insights from cultural landscapes, traditional cultural properties, conservation districts, public-private partnerships and anti-gentrification policies (to combat the forces of acculturation and economic segregation) are among the menu of methods discussed.