

Preserving Cultural Heritage with Amphibious Retrofits in Princeville, North Carolina

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Abstract

Princeville, North Carolina, is the oldest town in the United States incorporated by African Americans. It was established by freed slaves in 1865 after the US Civil War and incorporated twenty years later. This historic town, located in the floodplain of the Tar River, has twice been devastated by "100-year" hurricane-related flooding in less than two decades. Amphibious retrofits of Princeville's historic structures would both 1) provide visually-unobtrusive protection from flood damage, and 2) prevent the forced relocation (and erasure of history) of this culturally vibrant and historically significant African-American community. We are proposing that the Princeville Historic Museum, the Primitive Baptist Church and at least a dozen historic homes be retrofitted with buoyant foundations so that the next time the water rises they will "float when it floods".

Keywords: Princeville, North Carolina, Amphibious retrofit, Buoyant foundation, Historic preservation, Cultural heritage, First US African-American town, Flood mitigation, Relocation prevention, Damage risk reduction, ICAADE 2017

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