

BASELINERS: COLLECTING BASELINE DATA TO MEASURE SOCIAL BENEFITS IN TRANSFORMED LANDSCAPES

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1 ABSTRACT

Quantifying environmental, economic, and social benefits of performing landscapes generally require the acquisition of baseline data in order to compare pre- and post-project conditions and impacts. Unless design firms collected data in pre-project conditions, assessing the impacts of projects through comparative studies leads to less rigorous evaluations due to a high level of assumptions and limitations. Additionally, assessing social benefits is challenging due to the number of variables involved with collecting and quantifying social data, particularly when surveys were not conducted under pre-project conditions to obtain baseline information. The Landscape Architecture Foundation's Case Study Investigation program enabled a University of Nebraska-Lincoln research team to partner with two landscape architecture firms to conduct post-occupancy evaluations of two projects that transformed underutilized sites into high-performing landscapes in the Great Plains—Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park in Council Bluffs, IA and P Street Corridor in Lincoln, NE. The research team documented, measured, and evaluated social, environmental, and economic benefits at each site to capture the transformative aspects of these projects.

With minimal social baseline data present for either site, survey questions directed to users with pre-existing site knowledge—baseliners—was a critical component of the team's methodology to capture comparative perceptions of before and after conditions. This paper presents the team's findings and recommendations for the simultaneous collection of pre- and post-project data to quantify social benefits in landscape performance studies when documenting changes in user perceptions related to environmental aspects, such as safety, ease of access, and increased levels of activity.

1.1 Keywords

Landscape Performance, Landscape Architecture, Social Benefits, Baseline Data, User Survey Methodology