ABSTRACT

Efforts to remediate contaminated sites are still a relatively new practice in the world of planning, policy and architecture; particularly in the United States. Remediation programs and policies currently in place create a flexible but chaotic system, which can seem off-putting to developers, due to its complexity and cost. This complexity stems from the fact that the process encompasses a broad range of sites; ranging in size, use and contamination level. To respond to this variation the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) provides many different types of funding options, as well as technical/educational training through its Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as the Superfund Act.

This Thesis is an attempt to investigate the differences of remediation policies and techniques across the United States in order to understand what conditions facilitate the efficiency of remediation and reuse in a location. This study design has three parts: first, a comparative analysis of the proportion of Superfund sites by state; second, a comparative analysis of the proportion of sites by county within two selected states; and third, a case study analysis of selected sites from selected counties. Research involved secondary data analysis using the Superfund site database, CERCLIS, and population data from the 2010 US Census, resulting in the selection of New York and Texas, and their respective counties, for further analysis. In addition, site visits and documentation were done in New York and Texas. EPA officials, project managers and community leaders were interviewed in order to gain perspective on how remediation is undertaken and how reuse plays a part in the process. Recommendations are made to the EPA, as well as state and local governments, on how to craft better policies and programs in order to improve a site’s chances of being reused.