For many years, economic development and archaeology have been mortal enemies. Proponents of development have frequently regarded archaeologists and preservationists as obstructionist and uninterested in job creation and economic well-being, while archaeologists have associated economic development with the commoditization and destruction of heritage and swarms of tourists clambering on walls and helping themselves to "souvenirs".

More recently, some organizations, such as the Sustainable Preservation Initiative ("SPI") have seen economic development around heritage sites as a driver of preservation and a creator of a more powerful community identification with and relationship to the site. A paradigm focused upon empowering entrepreneurs and creating businesses whose success is tied to the ongoing preservation of a site creates a powerful incentive and a source of funding for such preservation. Meanwhile, more and more government entities and communities are asking "what's in it [archaeology] for us"?

In this lecture, Larry Coben discusses these new economic development paradigms, including case studies from SPI’s projects in Peru, and reflect upon whether archaeology and economic development can collaborate to achieve the goals of both.