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**LA 4198 LA Design Studio V:
 Fall Senior Studio 2009**

**Project: Cape May Coastal City:
 Planning & Designing a
 Cultural Landscape Network**



Project Overview:

The vibrant, historic City of Cape May, located at New Jersey's southern most point, is looking to improve several of its city parks as well as create a nature reserve in the eastern end of town. The city council's goal is to integrate these parks more fully and sustainably into this walkable and vibrant destination city. This two square mile 'study area' will serve as the overarching site for this project, providing an opportunity for students to explore the principles of park and nature reserve design, master planning, and mapping within an urban context of a historically, culturally, and ecologically significant city. It is your charge to observe, document, evaluate, plan, and design these spaces and places in accordance with the City of Cape May's Master Plan (updated in 2009) and the Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines.

In addition to park designs, the City of Cape May has requested that students prepare a "Pedestrian City Trail" connecting and educating residents and visitors to the city's rich cultural and natural heritage while forging a path towards a sustainable future. As such, you are encouraged to think and plan innovatively, understanding and integrating the past, while also considering the environmental and cultural issues of today and tomorrow, such as climate change, biodiversity, ecological footprints, and the implementation of continually evolving "best management practices".

Background:

The following excerpt is from Cape May Mayor Edward Mahaney, Jr.'s presentation titled, "Transforming your Community's Landscape, the Power of Arts, History, and Culture":

"Known as "The Nation's Oldest Seashore Resort", the City of Cape May has enjoyed a longstanding reputation as a Summer destination for tourists. With a current permanent population of 3,800 residents, the town plays host to 45,000 vacationers during the Summer weekends. This popularity is caused by a major economic rejuvenation over the past 35 years, primarily due to the incorporation of the arts, history, and culture into the community's continuing development.

On May 11, 1976, Cape May was designated as a National Historic Landmark district by the United States Department of the Interior. This rare distinction means that the entire City of Cape May is designated as a



National Historic Landmark, not just specified individual sites and buildings. Within the City, there is a centralized area that serves as the primary historic district and that contains most of the key and contributing sites and buildings. However, every property owner in the City of Cape May (whether the property is cited as historically designated or not) benefits from the inflated real estate values of Cape May property as result of our designation as a National Historic Landmark. As an example, the owner of a non-designated Village Greene quad (with two bedrooms and one bath) has a property valued in today's market at a minimum of \$320,000. Of that value, at least \$100,000 can be attributed to the National Historic Landmark status of Cape May. Our town's 600 Victorian era houses and hotels comprise one of the largest existing collections of late 19th Century frame buildings in the country.

This significant achievement has been coupled with a model program of a public-private partnership to infuse a progressive growth of Cape May's annual economy into a 10.5-month season, as opposed to the standard 12 week season in most seashore resorts. In this partnership, the City creates a nurturing environment by providing the essential physical infrastructure so that fledgling, local, non-profit cultural, arts, and historical organizations can flourish. In this arrangement, City-owned property is leased on a long-term basis for \$1.00 per year with these non-profit organizations responsible for the renovations, operations, and maintenance (not the taxpayers). Currently, the City has seven (7) such agreements involving City-owned property:

- 1) The historically designated Emlen Physick Estate with the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts;
- 2) The historically designated Washington Street Mall Information Booth with the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts;
- 3) The historically designated Franklin Street School with the Center for Community Arts;
- 4) The historically designated, former Welcome Center with Cape May Stage;
- 5) The Nature Center with the New Jersey Audubon Society;
- 6) The Marine Research Facility with Rutgers University; and
- 7) The historically designated Transportation Center/Welcome Center with the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May.

Within this wide array of public-private partnership initiatives, tremendous opportunities have been presented and pursued to unify the residential and business segments of the Cape May population to achieve the civic, social, cultural, arts, financial, and tourism goals of the entire community. These partnerships have created additional full-time and part-time paid positions that attract talented individuals as residents to maintain our population base and solidify our economic vitality. Also, many of our permanent and Summer residents (especially our retirees) have and continue to constitute the significant bank of volunteers who plan, develop, implement, and staff the vast array of programs, services, and activities which the above-cited organizations offer on a year-round basis to our tourists as well as our permanent and part-time residents. In fact, this comprehensive schedule of arts, history, cultural, social, environmental, educational, and recreational programs, services, and activities could not possibly be funded and staffed by the City of Cape May and the private sector without the dedication and commitment of this army of volunteers.

It should be noted that the marketing and promotion of Cape May has been enhanced by the creation of the City's Tourism Commission in 2004 (which is funded by an additional \$50 fee on each mercantile license) and the recent establishment of the Washington Street Mall Business Improvement District (which is funded by an additional \$500-800 fee on the pertinent mercantile licenses).

Interestingly, during the last 35 years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of professional practitioners of the arts, culture, and history who have been attracted to Cape May as a permanent residence, Summer retreat, or scheduled, periodic performance site. This enhancement has strengthened the foundation of Cape May as a destination for tourists seeking an art, culture, and history haven.



Cape May has also gained such award-winning distinctions as:

- 1) "One of the 100 Best Small Art Towns" by John Villani in 1996;
- 2) "One of America's Prettiest Painted Places" by the Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute in conjunction with Better Homes & Gardens and Architecture Magazines in 1998 and 2000 (Cape May is the only city in the Nation to receive this distinction twice);
- 3) "The Restaurant Capital of New Jersey" from the New York Times, New Jersey Monthly, New Jersey on Line, and many other reputable rating services on an annual basis;
- 4) "Birding Migration Capital of North America" by Roger Tory Peterson and "Birder's World";
- 5) "One of the Country's Largest Fishing Ports" base upon industry standards;
- 6) "One of Frommer's Top Destinations for 2008"; and
- 7) "One of America's 20 Prettiest Town" by ForbesTraveler.com in October 2008.



A key component in achieving these impressive distinctions has been establishment of a "strong" Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) by the Cape May City Council (the town's governing body) in the 1970s. Under the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, our HPC serves as an advisory board to the Cape May Planning Board, Zoning Board, and City Council. As a "strong" HPC, this body has been entrusted by ordinance with the authority to hear and decide all applications for the demolition of property in the City of Cape May.

Just as importantly, our HPC has the responsibility for reviewing all construction applications (including renovations), as well as conducting review committee meetings and

formal hearings (as necessary) on construction applications to ensure compliance with the City's Master Plan, ordinances, and guidelines pertaining to historic preservation so that the integrity and maintenance of our National Historic Landmark designation is assured. Our HPC is also responsible for the formulation and updating of the Historic Preservation Element that is included in the City's Master Plan that is created and adopted by the Planning Board and re-examined and rewritten (as necessary) every six years. In fact, the vital role of history, art, and culture is woven throughout the fabric of Cape May's Master Plan, especially in the Elements devoted to land use, economics, recreation, transportation, and community facilities, as well as historic preservation.

The City of Cape May Overarching Goals:

There are several issues that have been addressed by the City of Cape May in past master planning efforts. Cape May planning officials would like for students to continue to consider these issues and opportunities as they develop master plans for the park sites:

- Creation of public spaces that can accommodate a wide variety of people including city residents, short and long term visitors, outdoor, boating, and birding enthusiasts, residents of the Coast Guard Station, and industrial laborers.
- Linkages between the parks and residential, commercial, military, and harbor areas
- Supplement the mapped/marked walking and bicycle tours with the creation of a "Pedestrian City Trail".
- Encouragement of energy efficient landscapes and low impact development

Site-specific and Pedestrian City Trail goals:

Rotary Park and Environs:

- Inventory, map and note the existing conditions of the park and environs
- Identify issues, opportunities, constraints, and objectives for the redevelopment of Rotary Park, its adjacent intersections, connections, and parking area.
- Propose design alternatives that can be phased over time that provide visitors with a sense of arrival to the City of Cape May
- Evaluate and design the existing path alignments and materials.)
- Propose design alternatives for the intersection of Lafayette and Jackson Streets, which support a new sense of arrival to the City.
- Re-connect Rotary Park with the Washington Street Mall
- Evaluate and propose parking area alternatives.
- Evaluate the location of the band-shell, which is to remain.



Harborview Park:

- Inventory, map and note all existing conditions in and adjacent to the park.
- Identify issues, opportunities, constraints, and objectives for Harborview Park
- Propose alternative designs that integrate the park into Cape May's city fabric.
- Evaluate the parking area and propose possible sustainable site improvements
- Maintain views of the harbor from adjacent homes.



Sewell Pond Sanctuary:

- Identify issues, opportunities, constraints, and objectives for the development of a nature center and reserve on environmentally sensitive ground; includes wetlands, military adjacencies, and a rich wildlife habitat
- Design a series of trails that dynamically engage the public with the ecology of the site.
- Develop a program that can accommodate a nature center using the relocated "Solarium" (see photo on page 3) with public amenities, parking, and connections to other natural areas and nature centers in Cape May.



Pedestrian City Trail

- Research, Inventory and map all historic, cultural, ecological, commercial and recreation places of interest.
- Identify issues, opportunities, constraints, and objectives, which will influence and inform the design of the trail.
- Graphically communicate the Pedestrian City Trail identifying all landmarks, buildings, spaces and places. Include interpretive text and educational information for each point of interest.

Each concept and plan must include the following elements:

- Sustainable design strategies
- Pedestrian and bicycle circulation
- Historical significance
- Best Management Practices for stormwater management
- Bird Habitat

- Educational Panels addressing the History, Culture and/or Ecology of Place

REQUIRED PRODUCTS:

Drawings should be presented on uniform sheets (24"x36" or as appropriate) with title blocks.

You are responsible for the following items:

Site Visit – Friday, September 11th

A site visit will take place on Friday, September 11th. Transportation will be provided to Cape May. The bus will depart from Ambler Campus at **8:00 am sharp** and return at 7:00 pm. We will tour the city and sites together on a Trolley upon arrival. You will then have time to explore on your own and begin your inventory and analysis work. Bring a copy of the site survey to take notes on, along with a camera, scale, colored pencils or pens, camera, tape measure, binoculars and other materials you feel appropriate. As the site is not close by, It will be critical to take as many photographs as possible. You will need to plan a return visit on your own as you will not be able to complete your field work in one visit.

Inventory, Case Study Research and Community Survey – DUE: Monday, October 5th and 12th

The class will work in groups to prepare the following submittals:

- Cape May City inventory to include but not be limited to: 1) city history, 2) ecology and natural resources, 3) parks and recreation, 4) tourism, 5) commerce and industry. This should include a complete inventory and mapping of significant historic structures, commercial districts, parks, cultural and ecological landmarks, and recreation areas of interest.
- Park Site Inventories (3): Utilizing the surveys provided by The City or base maps that you may need to develop on your own (if City surveys do not arrive in time), prepare a complete assessment of existing site conditions using photographs and field notes to include but not be limited to; land use, adjacent buildings, vegetation, views, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, utilities, lighting, site furniture, public transportation, aspect, soils and drainage. The inventories are to be a thorough documentation of everything that exists on the site including dimensions, materials and condition.
- Case Study: research and document one or more successful historic towns and cities with recent city park and trail retrofits. Contact city officials and the design professionals to Identify the scope of the project and learn of the processes instituted, challenges faced and lessons learned. Each student is to prepare his or her own case study for park and city trail retrofits. Selected studies are to be posted on the Temple University Black Board so as to avoid duplication of studies.
- Sustainability: Research and document Sustainable Design practices and applicable site strategies. Each student is to do his or her individual research.
- Surveys – Students will develop programming-related questions for distribution and collection at the first public meeting. Surveys will also be posted on the Town of Cape May's website and will be placed throughout the community in public venues (Town Hall, retail stores, schools, post office, library, etc.) with collection boxes. Responses will be collected and collated in report format. Each student is to prepare questions. The group is to review them all and formulate one survey for review by the Task Force.
- Potential Grant Sources – As a group, research should be completed identifying potential sources of funding for each of the four projects.

Task Force Meeting – Wednesday, October 14th - TBC

The Task Force will be comprised of Mayor Mahaney and a handful of stakeholders he invites to represent the City. They will provide interim reviews and guidance on all aspects of the project. This first Task Force meeting should occur about one week prior to the first Community Meeting. The Task Force meeting agenda should include; Site Inventories, Case Study Research, Community Surveys, Grant Sources and Community Meeting Format.

**City of Cape May – Public Meeting #1 – Inventory, Case Study Review, Goals and Objectives
Wednesday Evening, October 21st - TBC**

While some programming information and background has already been conceived by the town and will be provided to the students and faculty, there will be a series of public meetings to engage the local community in the design process. A process that is community driven will lead to ongoing participation through an increased sense of user or community ownership. While sometimes contentious but more

often productive and rewarding, community engagement is an essential ingredient of making successful urban open space. The first of the two meetings this semester will be facilitated by students and faculty. Students will present the inventories and case study research, to introduce the projects and inform the public on existing conditions and precedents in other cities, which will serve to inform our collaborative efforts. With students and faculty serving as facilitators and scribes, those attending will be broken up into groups of 8 – 10 to discuss their hopes, dreams and concerns for the City and begin a conversation about Design priorities. The goal will be to solicit input on the programming goals and objectives for the three city parks and pedestrian city trail(s).

Goals and Objectives – Due Wednesday, October 28th

Based upon the completed site inventories and the community input, each group is to prepare a preliminary list of *Goals and Objectives*. The Goals should be few in number and overarching statements, which reflect the Communities values and aspirations for this project. These broad directives should guide the philosophy, character and attitude of your work. Each group will also prepare a comprehensive list of specific and separate *Objectives* for the two parks, the nature sanctuary and the pedestrian city trail. The *Objectives* should be supportive of the Community *Goals*, specific and measurable. The objectives will become your program for each design project.

Site Analysis – Due Wednesday, November 4th

In light of the Preliminary *Goals and Objectives* established, the completed site inventories, and the lessons learned from the Case Study Research, each group will prepare a preliminary Site Analysis Composite for the two parks, the nature sanctuary and the pedestrian city trail. This is to be an illustrative drawing inclusive of text, photographs and graphics identifying the inherent opportunities and constraints

Conceptual Plans – Draft due: Wednesday, November 25th,

Each student will incorporate feedback from the first public meeting to help develop three conceptual site designs for the two parks, the nature sanctuary and the pedestrian city trail. The designs should include concept diagrams expressing the *parti* that is the thesis of your ideas. Each concept plan should address the overall site organization and general locations of proposed site elements including site circulation, cultural and natural resources, vegetation, lighting, views, and accessibility. The conceptual plans should include rough sections, thumbnail perspectives and concept images to help communicate your ideas. Consideration must be given to the short and long term realities of existing conditions, the future vision for the park, and the transition of one to the other.

As a class or in groups we will engage in Peer Reviews of the designs. Subsequently, each group will collaborate and take the best ideas from their collective presentations and work to finalize one concept for each of the four assignments. Each group is to prepare a Sketch Up model for each of the two parks and the nature sanctuary designs selected.

Task Force Meeting – Wednesday, December 2nd – TBC

The agenda should include a review of the Goals and Objectives, Site Analysis, Preliminary Design Concepts and the format for the 2nd Community Meeting.

Final Concept Plans - Due Monday, December 7th

As a group you will evaluate each of the plans carefully considering the Task Force's feedback. The final Concept Plans should address sufficient information about layout, grading, storm water management, landscape, hardscape, lighting, site furnishings, and other appropriate special features to elicit community responses. The paper-based and/or web-based Pedestrian city trail plan should include detailed understanding and depiction of routes, sites of interest, times and distances between locations, and accompanying clear and concise narratives describing each route.

The concept presentations must include a color rendered plan, axonometric perspective/Sketch Up rendering(s), concept diagrams, and your written goals and objectives, which have driven your design.

Time must also be allocated to prepare power point slides and organize the content and order of your concept presentations,

**City of Cape May – Public Meeting #2 - Conceptual Design Presentation
Thursday Evening December 10th - TBC**

Students will present their conceptual plans at a second community. Following the presentations, students and faculty will facilitate smaller discussion groups to review the conceptual plans and to provide the opportunity for public comment. Students will develop evaluation forms to help the public record their preferred design elements and priorities.

Required Reading:

Placemaking, Developing Town Centers, Main Streets and Urban Villages, by Charles C. Bohl
(available in the Temple University Bookstore)

Resources and Reference Materials

[The City of Cape May website](#)

[Cape May County website](#)