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Section III: Evolving Townscapes & Landscapes within their Settings
Managing Dynamic Change

*Evolving Heritage Landscapes within their Settings:
Examples of Planning for the Stewardship & Sustainability
of Protected Landscapes in the United States*

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INTRODUCTION

Protected landscapes require planning for their core resources and also for the context around them. The global trends of sprawling development and increasing built-up urban edges threaten to alter the character not only of the protected resources but also of the setting for these resources. Stewardship of the protected landscape requires detailed consideration of the resource and the surrounding setting. One of the questions addressed in the ICOMOS Xi'an meeting call for proposals was: How can we define, physically and otherwise, the settings of living townscapes and landscapes of heritage value? In planning and implementing protection and management for single heritage landscapes under private or public ownership, I believe that there are three scales to define and fully consider. Starting with the larger setting beyond the ownership boundary these are:

- Larger Setting for the Heritage Landscape
- Lands Adjacent to the Heritage Landscape
- Core Heritage Landscape Resource

Each of these can be clearly defined for the heritage resource. The historic character of the heritage landscape and the degree to which that character is evident today, guides the definition of both core resources and setting for the heritage landscape. When we work with heritage landscapes, we address the full range of resources that comprise the landscapes using the character defining-features list:

- Land Uses and Patterns
- Spatial Organization and Visual Relationships
- Topography
- Vegetation
- Circulation Systems and Elements
- Water Features and Drainage Systems
- Non-Habitable Structures and Buildings
- Site Furnishings and Objects

The character-defining features of the heritage landscape, noted in this listing, are explored in the archival research, historic period narratives, fieldwork addressing existing conditions and exploration and selection of preservation interventions. Rediscovering, in detail, the historic character of the landscape guides the consideration of the future.

A. THE LARGER SETTING

The first, the larger setting, has more influence on the quality of the heritage landscape visit than may be readily apparent. The experience of the visit springs from the frame of mind of the visitor and the arrival route and the progression into the historic property influences that visit. A clear route, through visually pleasing areas can improve the visit immeasurably. Likewise, a confusing path, through busy surrounds can make it difficult to reach the heritage resource and can begin the experience of the heritage landscape with concern and frustration rather than openness and interest. The larger setting around the heritage landscape can be defined as a context surrounding the property that must be passed through or the areas that can be viewed from the resource. The route to gain access to the heritage property is sometimes a series of optional routes depending on the point of origin of the visitor. However, the historic property can sometimes control access along a single route by providing visitor direction and maps.

B. ADJACENT LANDS, THE NEAR SETTING

The directly adjacent properties are important to the heritage resource because the visitor moves through these immediate surrounds and because the surrounds can often be seen from within the heritage property. While the heritage property does not often control the larger setting, there is an opportunity for collaboration and cooperation among owners. Partnering with neighboring properties toward common scenic conservation goals can provide long-range guidance for the protection of landscape character for both protected property and the larger setting. There are also opportunities for extending legal protections beyond the boundaries of the core heritage property that can control change within the area of the setting by creating overlay district zoning with specific regulations.

C. CORE HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

Due to growth and change over time the core of the heritage resource is sometimes a reduced land area from the historic one. The preserved lands are most often defined by the current property ownership boundary of the heritage landscape itself. Through a process of research this core area can be traced through time and the remaining historic land uses, patterns, systems and features can be identified.

In the United States, we follow a cultural landscape report guideline to develop planning documents focused on the core resource. This format includes the following five basic steps to create a thorough preservation planning study and report for a valued cultural landscape. Of course there are variations in the tasks and emphasis that depend on the property, project goals, documentation, budget and other factors. The basic steps are:

1. Historic Research & Period Plans- review of all available documents, often with some level of document search and organization carried out by the client group to reduce staffing costs. Historic research should begin locally with the property itself and their

archives and with the local history sources. Seek plans and photographs of the garden from local sources first. Then proceed to regional or national sources. It is always useful to find good aerial photographs if the garden is large enough to be seen in the image. Historic maps, tax maps, zoning maps, insurance maps often provide some detail. An illustrated landscape history narrative and a period plan or sequence of plan that capture the landscape in its as-built condition are developed in this step using a current plan and providing detail based from historic documents. The plan is assembled from historic plans, images, photos and remaining historic elements in the landscape today.

2. Existing Conditions Documentation- using all available mapping to understand the landscape as it is today. This task is facilitated by recent low scale aerial photos, both planimetric and oblique and by a recent, detailed survey map of the property. Fieldwork is carried out to add detail to the map and secure a full range of existing conditions photographs is added to produce a detailed drawing in digital format that can be compared with a historic period plan.
3. Assessment of historic integrity and landscape character. This task compares the historic conditions with the current ones and answers questions about the level of change and the degree to which the landscape embodies its historic character today. Comparisons of mapping and historic and current photographs are carried out in this section of the report.
4. Review and Selection of Landscape Preservation Treatment- options to preserve, restore, rehabilitate, reconstruct are tested. The philosophy of the project is clearly laid out in this section. The selected treatment is described in detail and is accompanied by an overall plan.
5. Discussion of Implementation: The phasing of the proposed treatment and the steps to implement the intervention are often laid out in some detail in a final chapter. In some cases priorities are set forth, reasoned out and described in a five or ten year plan. Detailed cost estimates for the intervention actions are detailed so that fund raising can proceed.

The National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative website www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hli is a useful source of preservation standards and guidelines. The NPS Guidelines for cultural landscapes are available there and related publications to include an extensive bibliography entitled titled *Making Educated Decisions*, Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA.

D. FOCUS ON SETTINGS FOR HERITAGE PROPERTIES

The directly adjacent properties and the area beyond the heritage property are not generally included in the cultural landscape report approach. This is a weakness of preservation planning for an individual property. The planning work and subsequently the heritage landscape stewardship and management often address only the core resource, without directing attention to the immediate context of neighboring properties or the larger setting of lands farther away that form the approach to the property or are elements within the viewshed.

The first challenge is for the owners to recognize that the property requires attention beyond the historic architecture, that the landscape is a valuable heritage resource itself. To often the focus is on a single building or a group of buildings and the immediate setting for these buildings, the heritage landscape, is deemed less important. However, the landscape shaped by people or events of import, often embodies a larger, more compelling historical narrative and is a significant heritage resource in its own right. The idea of a building or monument existing in isolation from its setting is antiquated and inappropriate. In fact most buildings and monuments are created simultaneously with a landscape that is a rural, suburban or urban setting for the monument. Although often listed on national registers or as World Heritage sites without a context, the setting for a monument is integral with the monument. Conception, study and treatment of an isolated historic object in a vacuum of blank space, leaves the heritage resource at the mercy of an unmanaged and likely unsupportive or improper setting.

Only when the owner of the property, the consulting planning professionals, or both parties judge the setting to be important is the planning and implementation project developed to include this larger setting. In this paper, two case studies of United States National Historic Landmark properties are presented. The authors firm, Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners, was able to plan for all three levels of a heritage property--larger setting, immediate surrounds and the core heritage property. These projects are single properties, held by private non-profits groups that are dedicated to the preservation and sustainability of the heritage landscapes.

A related issue is how to address a heritage city or town or portion of an urban area. The legal boundary or the historic district is a place to start in defining the heritage resources and in identifying the setting for those resources. However, as with individual properties, the historic area within the municipality may be well defined but the setting not clearly identified or protected as a context for the core resources. The setting for the neighborhood, district, town or city is a somewhat larger issue requiring some study. For World Heritage sites a buffer zone is often delineated. In the Vienna meeting addressing modern architecture, the heritage of the city was narrowly defined as the historic buildings, but all the lands of the city, to include the more than 50% of urban space that is streets, sidewalks, street trees, parks, squares rivers, bridges and other spaces, contributes to the character, heritage value and uniqueness.

F. HERITAGE LANDSCAPE SETTING PRESERVATION EXAMPLES

As a preservation landscape architect, I address the settings for a historically important building where the landscape is of secondary value but is an important supporting resource and setting but I also often address historic landscapes that are the primary monument with the buildings in them as contributing resources and the larger setting around them of importance.

F1. Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest

The third President of the United States of America, Thomas Jefferson and his wife Martha Wayles Jefferson, inherited the 4,819 acre Poplar Forest plantation in rural Virginia from Martha's father, John Wayles at his death in 1773. The plantation in Bedford County was situated in the rolling hills of Virginia's piedmont uplands, south of the James River and east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. During his second term in 1806 President Thomas Jefferson began developing a hilltop at Poplar Forest plantation as an occasional retreat.

A small portion of the former Jefferson property, some fifty acres with the octagonal house on the hilltop, was purchased in 1983 by the non-profit Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest. Today Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, in rural Forest, Virginia, a National Historic Landmark heritage property of 600 acres (about 290 hectares), the inundation of sprawling urban and suburban development surrounding this open property has made the wayfinding and arrival process complicated and confusing. Heritage Landscapes developed *The Poplar Forest Historic Landscape Schematic Master Plan* to address this valuable heritage property at three scales:

1. Arrival zone through the surrounding suburban development in a fast growing county
2. Plantation zone for the agricultural and woodland landscape and the siting of the new visitor campus
3. Core ornamental landscape defined by Jefferson around his retreat house as a 60- acre plot around the house and extending downhill on all sides

Heritage Landscapes inventoried the archival materials and archaeological findings, analyzed the landscape character of each of the principal historic periods, described the existing conditions and developed a comprehensive approach to the landscape guided by clear principles. Although much of the Jefferson period landscape character had been altered or lost over time, portions of the property have potential for recapture of documented historic conditions.

On a regional scale, Heritage Landscapes worked with Poplar Forest staff and board members to develop a viable, more direct approach in consultation with the Virginia Department of Transportation, Bedford District, the City of Lynchburg and the Lynchburg Metropolitan Planning Organization. Preferred routing from the interstate highway to Poplar Forest was presented to the Virginia Transportation authorities. Proposed project for upgrading nearby roadways were monitored and testimony was presented. Meetings were held and designs put forward for an improved entrance along a state road using a parkway design with a tree lined edges and a median. Incremental progress is being made on clarifying the approach to Poplar Forest through the surrounding development.

Plantation recommendations propose integrated campus development in an appropriate area, improved property circulation for visitor, bus and service vehicles and pedestrians, and interpretation of the plantation, woodland and archaeological sites. The boundary of the property is already being managed to foster a native woodland buffer along the edges. Existing woodland areas are being selectively pruned with undesirable species removed. At the same time, detailed archaeological work has been undertaken to clear the areas as woodland so that trees can be planted.

A new campus around a proposed Visitor Learning Center has been sited at a ½ mile distance from the core landscape and house. Woodlands and topography screen this complex of sustainable, indoor and outdoor facilities. Jefferson's 60-acre curtilage defines the historic core landscape and interpretation, improved circulation and minimal support facilities are planned with the house and designed landscape as the focus. Heritage Landscapes is continuing to work with the Corporation for Poplar Forest on implementing this comprehensive plan for the arrival, plantation and core landscape.

F2. Shelburne Farms

Shelburne Farms was developed from the 1880s through the 1930s by Dr. W. Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb as a combination of scenery and productivity in the pastoral and picturesque style. This style and its application to the lakefront property in Shelburne reflected

the overall concepts proposed by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. in a 1887 preliminary design for the property. Olmsted wrote to Webb in 1888 that Shelburne Farms had the potential to be one of the “most interesting and publicly valuable private work of the time on the American continent”.

At Shelburne Farms, a 1400 acre (560 hectares) National Historic Landmark, we worked with the non-profit Shelburne Farms Inc. to develop the Shelburne Farms Landscape Stewardship Plan to meet their mission of heritage preservation and environmental education. The setting of Shelburne Farms on the shores of Lake Champlain surrounded by private and public properties is the subject of land stewardship interest. Various tools are applied to the preservation of scenic landscape character and quality in a partnership effort. The lakeside, agricultural landscape of today is an outstanding example of an ornamental farm with a mission of environmental education and sustainability.

In 2000 Heritage Landscapes conducted the cultural landscape portion of a three-part IMLS Conservation study. Conservation recommendations were based on the historic research findings, current conditions and opportunities for landscape character recapture. The Shelburne Farms Landscape Stewardship Plan studied the property from multiple perspectives, adding conservation interest in adjacent and nearby lands. The plan addresses improved circulation, refined activity centers, stabilized lakeshore, woodland renewal, ecological protection and recapture of historic features.

An important component of the stewardship plan is an extensive mapping database that incorporates historic, current and future elements, such as property ownership, land use, stewardship, field and forest management, circulation, infrastructure and utilities. The mapping project has aided Shelburne Farms in collaborating with all its neighbors in conservation efforts. Town lands, Nature Conservancy property, and private holdings are adjacent to and within the viewsheds of Shelburne Farms. These properties of conservation interest receive the constant attention of Shelburne Farms in terms of extending conservation initiatives.

Within Shelburne Farms a variety scenic modifications to lease-hold properties have protected and enhanced the scenic quality of the landscape by allowing lease holders to enjoy scenic views and vistas while partially blocking these private structures from views obtained by visitors to Shelburne farms. In a recent project to upgrade electrical power lines the historic documentation of Shelburne Farms, National Historic Landmark, aided in presenting clear testimony about the visual impact of high power lines within the viewshed to the east. The Shelburne Farms Landscape Stewardship Plan, which we continue to implement with the stewards, received professional awards from the 2002 Vermont Public Spaces and the 2003 VT ASLA awards juries.

F3. Capitol Square at the Virginia Sate Capitol

For the Virginia Capitol project, the grounds around the monumental building designed by Thomas Jefferson, are important in their own right but secondary to the buildings. Currently Heritage Landscapes is the preservation landscape architecture member of a multi-disciplinary team restoring and accommodating greater use at the historic Virginia Capitol and Capitol Square for Hillier Architecture and the Department of General Services. The main building modeled after a Greek temple was designed by Thomas Jefferson and constructed on Shocktoe Hill by 1797. The first improvements of the “Publick Square” were designed by Maximillian Godefroy and constructed from 1816 to 1820. In 1850 John Notman redesigned the square in the picturesque style and plans by George W. Browne adapted the hilltop landscape to the addition of wings around the central Jefferson temple from 1907 to 1909. Today contributions from each era of design and construction remain visible.

Heritage Landscapes is providing preservation landscape architecture for schematic design, design development, construction documents and construction administration to recapture the 1909 character of portions of Capitol Square and to integrate the new construction. We began work on the project schematic design with a review of the 2004 Capitol Square Master Plan by Rhodeside and Harwell and history by T. Tyler Potterfield Jr. to understand the origins, evolution, character and issues facing the historic landscape.

In terms of setting the Capitol building is set within the square, which is the immediate setting, provides breathing space and viewing space for the building setting it apart from the closely built up surrounding city. The steep topography of the hill affords extensive views of the monumental building from various directions. The historic character of the interior provided additional paths form which to view the building and move around the square. The landscape rehabilitation project reinstates these paths to the degree possible to afford greater variety of scenery. The 1818 ornamental cast iron fence, the surrounding sidewalk and the city streets define the edges of the square. The surrounding buildings create a further setting nearly all of these structures were constructed after the Capitol building itself but the scale and detail of the buildings provides an appropriate setting. The important aspects of this setting that can be addressed in the project include:

- Restoration of the perimeter fence
- Removal of non-historic vegetation to reopen views to the Capitol building
- Planting of additional tall canopy trees to recapture the varied light and shade of the historic square
- Adjustments to perimeter sidewalks and parking to enhance arrival and appearance

The landscape design addresses the needs of this working capitol, visitor destination and heritage tourism site, while recapturing the open, sloping South Lawn, incorporating a new Inaugural Plaza and responding to the Extension with a new entry court on Bank Street. All of these new elements are distinguishable from the historic ones and are subservient to them. Through close collaboration with the project architects, structural and civil engineers, security, media, utility and lighting design, the work to be constructed will honor and restore this historic civic landscape and integrate compatible but distinguishable new construction.

G. CONCLUSION

The identification of unique character of a heritage landscape and the importance and character of the setting for that and in all its components is at the heart of these planning efforts to guide heritage properties effectively into the future. The tools and techniques of this process are explored and articulated in the presentation.

Patricia M. O'Donnell, FASLA, AICP, is a US/ICOMOS member, served as Scientific Committee chair for the US/ICOMOS 7th International Symposium in 2004 and is a contributing member of the ICOMOS/IFLA Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes and a member of the IFLA Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes. She is principal and founder of Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners of Charlotte, Vermont and Norwalk, Connecticut. Since 1987, this professional firm has completed over 300 preservation projects addressing a variety of heritage landscape resources. She lives at Broad Reach Farm, Charlotte Vermont, USA, with Jim Donovan, her spouse.