

**Randolph T. Hester, Jr.**

University of California, Berkeley  
 College of Environmental Design  
 Department of Landscape Architecture  
 USA - California 94720, Berkeley, 202 Wurster Hall

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## Economic Progress Within Community Preservation

The Case of Manteo, North Carolina, U.S.A.

## Gospodarski napredak uz očuvanje zajednice

Primjer grada Mantea, Sjeverna Karolina, SAD

### Key words • Ključne riječi

Community design	oblikovanje zajednice
Cultural preservation	očuvanje kulture
Economic development	gospodarski razvoj
Landscape archit.	krajobrazna arhit.
<i>Sacred places</i>	<i>sveta mjesta</i>

### Abstract • Sažetak

The author presents an urban revitalization project that has been acclaimed in the U.S.A. for providing an economic recovery for a dying small city while preserving lifestyles and landscapes valued by local residents. The process, design techniques and outcomes are evaluated. Research results indicate the general success of a technique for identifying the most valued places, *the sacred structure of the city*, that inspired the design for redevelopment. This technique likely can be successfully applied in other small towns and cities that face conflicts between the maintenance of cultural heritage and economic growth.

Autor predložuje projekt urbane revitalizacije koji je izvanredno prihvaćen u SAD-u jer je omogućio gospodarski oporavak maloga gradića na umoru, uz istodobno očuvanje načina života i pejzažnih vrijednosti omiljenih mjesnom stanovništvu. Autor ocjenjuje način na koji je to urađeno, tehnike planiranja i rezultate. Rezultati istraživanja upućuju na uspješnost tehnike u očuvanju najvažnijih mjesta u gradu, tzv. *svete strukture grada*, koja su inspirirala sam razvojni projekt. Ta se tehnika može djelotvorno primijeniti i u drugim mjestima i gradovima suočenim s oprekom između čuvanja kulturnog naslijeđa i gospodarskog razvoja.

## Introduction

In the United States, many rural small cities have become obsolete as economies shift, technology and transportation specialize and natural resources are depleted. Attempts at economic redevelopment have often destroyed local culture in the process. Manteo, North Carolina experimented with a creative approach through which generations-old cultural traditions and places inspired a new economy based on wooden boat building.

In the early 1900s Manteo was a center of commerce for the Outer Banks of North Carolina, a chain of islands parallel to the mainland. Because it provided a safe harbor, Manteo became a center of public and commercial life famous for its fishing fleets and boat building craftsmen.

But when bridge opened access to North Carolina's Outer Banks in the 1950s, the new highways to the beaches passed the island town of Manteo by. For the next 30 years, the beaches thrived as summer playgrounds for the metropolitan mid-Atlantic; Manteo plummeted from the region's primary trade center to a near ghost town. With unemployment and tax rates among the highest, Manteo typified communities classed as depressed, high risk and desperate. The contrast with the "go-go" economy of nearby beach towns provided Manteo with a certain poetry, but little else.

During 1980 and 1981, I developed a plan with the townspeople that we hoped would bring Manteo new economic purpose and prosperity, yet not sacrifice traditional lifestyles and valued landscapes. Today, most of our plan has been implemented. The town is home to a new state historical park and a reconstructed ship reminiscent of the vessel that carried Sir Walter Raleigh's lost colonists on their journey here 400 years ago. Local artisans built the ship at a new boat building center on the waterfront, and the center continues to build wooden vessels and hold classes where traditional shipwright techniques are taught. Enough tourism has been attracted to restore failing indigenous industries. Unemployment has been cut in half.

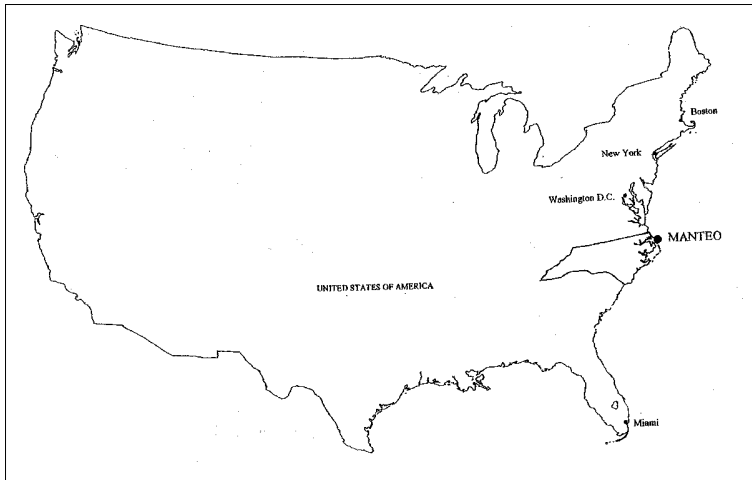
In some ways, Manteo's recovery is familiar. A small dying town takes an economic U-turn by capitalizing on its smallness, intimacy, natural beauty, village character and rural past. Panacea for poverty! Unfortunately, for many communities, this turnaround spells the demise of community traditions, destruction of valued places and their replacement by a phony folk culture.

Recognizing the pitfalls associated with inviting new development, Manteo took unusual steps to avoid a tourist takeover and a junk culture.<sup>1</sup> As the town's community designer, I helped residents identify and preserve their valued lifestyles and landscapes. Once identified, important social patterns and places, which locals called the *Sacred Structure*, inspired our plan for community revitalization.

## Uncovering Valued Places

Manteo originally hired me to redesign the village waterfront, but it took only a few days to realize that a waterfront park would be a cosmetic cover-up. With over 20% seasonal unemployment and declining tax base, Manteo needed a new economy. The

1 For a complete discussion of the community planning process employed, see: Randolph T. Hester, Jr. and Marcia McNally: *Manteo, North Carolina Avoids the Perils of Boom-or-bust Tourism* in: "Small Town", Vol. 14, No. 3 (1983), pp. 4-11, and Randolph T. Hester, Jr.: *Selling Landstyle and Lifescape for Economic Recovery* in: "Landscape Architecture", Vol. 75, No. 1 (1985), pp. 78-85.



**FIG. 1.** North Carolina state with Manteo

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**SL 1.** Država Sjeverna  
Karolina s gradom  
Manteom

mayor, a young architect and also a native, saw the town through the eyes of both a professional designer and a local insider. He loved the place. He wanted the town to recapture the spirit he experienced as a child playing on its bustling docks. We agreed that day to expand our contract. I outlined a holistic community development process, no mere pretty park. The town board approved the idea and I moved my office to Manteo. We began immediately a community-wide discussion to design a strategy to overcome its problems.

As I talked to more community leaders, I realized that everyone shared the mayor's passion for the place. I was struck not only by the emotion with which the people talked about how special Manteo was but also by how clearly they articulated the subtle qualities of the place.

This was a happy coincidence. In my community design work I search for social nuances to inspire form and I read what I could find about spatial values and concluded that unconscious attachment to place might be a powerful factor in community planning.<sup>2</sup> I felt that designers would find the concept of spatial values more useful than our present idea of landscape aesthetics, but the words *Sacred Structure* never occurred to me. I welcomed the opportunity Manteo offered to explore these ideas, but Manteo's problems seemed to require economic development, not studies of emotional attachment to place. However, through our community goals survey, many of the same points the mayor and leaders had articulated resurfaced.

When asked what they liked most about their town, residents often mentioned small town qualities such as informal friendliness (51% listed this in an open-ended question) and the ability to walk almost everywhere in town (22%, an unusually high response). Residents mentioned places such as the waterfront, the village and specific ships as important because they represented home or provoked roots.<sup>3</sup>

Residents spoke clearly. They wanted new economic development, but they wanted the small town atmosphere preserved. We knew we could protect neighborhoods by zoning, locate facilities com-

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the results see: Randolph T. Hester, Jr.: *A Womb With A View* in: "Landscape Architecture" (September 1979), pp. 475-481.

<sup>3</sup> Randolph T. Hester, Jr.: *Survey of Townspeople: Public Report One*; Raleigh, North Carolina State University (1980).

pactly to reinforce walking and use the establishment of an historic district to save venerable architecture. But that didn't satisfy us. We felt that these remedies missed the essence of what townspeople said. We undertook the task of finding out precisely what lifestyle and landscape features were essential to the continued functioning of the town's culture.

Behavior mapping gave us another clue. For several weeks we sat in various locations and recorded what people did and where. The resulting maps showed us activity settings for the townspeople's daily patterns. When we put the rough sketches of our activity maps together, a deeper understanding of the town emerged spontaneously. A powerful social mosaic explained not only how space related to the social patterns, but also how people had invested cultural memory in certain parts of the landscape. While describing a few of these places in the goals survey, they had not mentioned most of what we observed. Activities like exchanging gossip at the post office, hanging out at the docks and checking out the water (tides, shoreline, fishing catches, weather and gossip) recurred in the same places each day and likely had for years. Daily ritual had place specificity and the cultural dependence on places seemed more widespread than reported in our interviews.

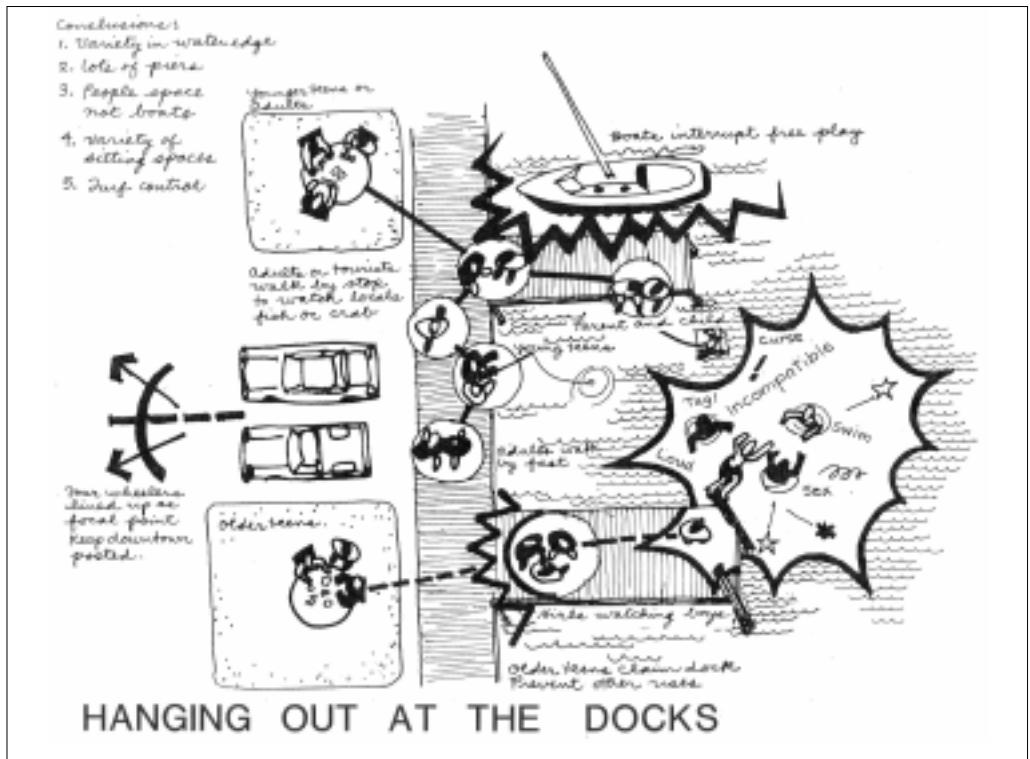
Still, we were not certain about the most essential places in the town's life. But we had hunches based on our knowledge of social patterns in other towns, the survey results, our behavior mapping and informal discussions with town leaders. From these hunches another community designer and I listed the places we thought crucial to the social fabric; where the landscape concretized community and psychological values.

We both thought the gravel parking lot essential because it provided the daily setting for checking out the water and for special community festivals. Although this ordinary looking unpaved lot was left over as the buildings on the abandoned waterfront were demolished, it embodied both everyday habits and special rituals essential to the town's sense of self.

We guessed that Jule's Park would be inviolable because the mayor told us that Jule Burrus built it from ruins as a labor of love. When the high school most Manteo residents had attended was demolished, Jule Burrus removed the rubble and built a park from it. The rubble was loaded with sentiment, representing school days to nearly everyone. As the new park took shape, Jule's labor came to represent a Manteo value that they could build from ruins.

We revised the list after checking it with several town board members. A newspaper questionnaire we developed asked townspeople to rank these places in order of significance to them. We also asked residents to state which places they thought could be changed to accommodate tourism and which they would not sacrifice for tourist dollars. We posed a series of specific trade-offs such as whether the respondent agreed that it was more important to leave the Christmas tree in the gravel parking lot downtown than to use the space for parking. The responses allowed us not only to measure the intensity of attachment to places versus tourism benefits but also to recheck the relative importance of each place.

A ranked and weighted list of significant places resulted. One



resident, seeing how many places ranked higher than the local churches and cemetery, dubbed the list the *Sacred Structure*. The cemetery and the high school provided benchmarks for comparison, and we used them as cutoff points for the list of places that new development should not negatively affect. The places included the marshes surrounding the town, Jule's Park, a drug store and soda fountain (which, each afternoon, served local teens and elderly fresh-squeezed lemonade and chicken salad sandwiches), the post office, churches, the Christmas Shop, front porches, the town launch, a statue of Sir Walter Raleigh, the *Duchess* Restaurant (where locals gathered for morning coffee and discussed and resolved important political issues before formal voting), the town hall, locally-made unreadable street signs, the town cemetery, the Christmas tree in the gravel parking lot, park post lamps erected in memory of loved ones and two historical sites. The newspapers published the results.

A map of the *Sacred Structure* was included with the inventory plans prepared during the planning process. It, similar to other land use maps, simply showed the places, colored with varying intensities, based upon the questionnaire results.

We immediately knew that the *Sacred Structure* touched a sub-conscious nerve. Residents wanted these places protected. The editor of the newspaper expressed his and local concern that the places' identification meant that the designers might change them to attract tourists. He carefully listed the ones not to profane, stating that they were "perfect jewels" the way they were. Frequently during the planning process that followed, the editor

**FIG. 2.A** In order to fully realize Manteo's redevelopment, local people needed to visualize what would actually happen to their valued *sacred places* as development proceeded. "Hanging out at the docks" is a good example of this process since it consisted of a large number of small scale social interactions.

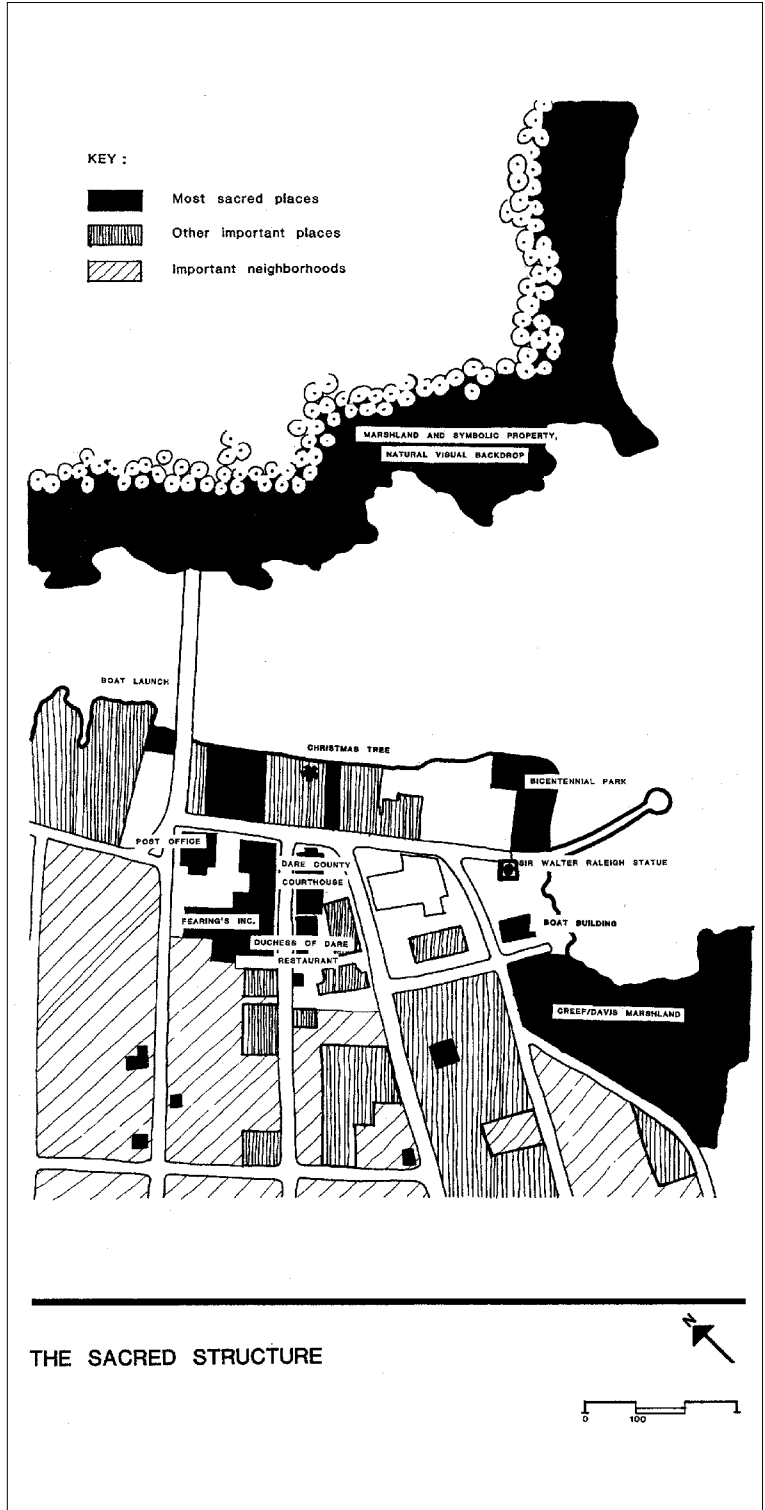
Drawing by • Crtez  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL 2.A.** Da bi se Manteo mogao potpuno razviti na novim osnovama, mjesno si je stanovništvo moralo predočiti što će se stvarno dogoditi sa njihovim mjestima, kako razvojni proces bude napredovao. Dobar primjer tog procesa je "dangubljenje na dokovima" jer je to prilika za mnoštvo malih društvenih kontakata.

**FG. 2. B** Location of the Sacred Structure places in Manteo

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**SL. 2. B. Razmještaj svetih mjesta u Manteu**



reminded me that those places were sacred and that locals would sacrifice economic gain to save them because they had a higher value than dollars.

## Sacred Places

What did people mean by this *Sacred Structure*? The concept of *sacred place* making, or community sacred structure, is easy to accept in primitive cultures. We smile knowingly at tribes who proclaim their village square as the center of the universe, or who designate twisted plants as magic. It is harder to comprehend that we, in our modern, mobile and secular American society, hold any place necessary to our daily lives as sacred. Yet our cultural preoccupation with placelessness and topophilia (literally "place love") suggests that we do highly value some places. In this context, a useful definition of *Sacred Structure* is: *places-buildings, outdoor spaces and landscapes that exemplify, typify, reinforce and perhaps even extol everyday life patterns and special rituals of community life; places that are so essential to residents' lives through use or by symbolism that the community collectively identifies with them.* The places become synonymous with residents' concepts of and use of their town. Their loss reorders or destroys something or some social process familiar to the community's collective being.

Manteo's *Sacred Structure*, for the most part, consists of humble places, "holes-in-the-wall," that provide settings for the community's daily routine. While they combine to express Manteo's uniqueness and probably give form to residents' internal images of their town, not one is exotic. Yet each is eloquent in its context. They are typical features commonly found along the Carolina coastal landscape. They are familiar, homey and homely.

These places look unappealing to the trained professional eyes of an architect, historian, real estate developer or upper middle class tourist. As a result, in Manteo, historic preservation legislation had protected only two places in the *Sacred Structure*. Zoning law had protected only a few, and less than half of the sacred places were identified as significant in a Kevin Lynch-based image survey!!! This startled us. It meant that the existing planning and design mechanisms developed precisely to preserve local cultural heritage, almost entirely ignored the places most critical to Manteo's present lifestyles, most valued patterns and local memory. Decades of advances in local land use controls had completely missed this essential point. But the lack of planning and legal mechanisms to uncover and then protect the *Sacred Structure* was only part of the problem.

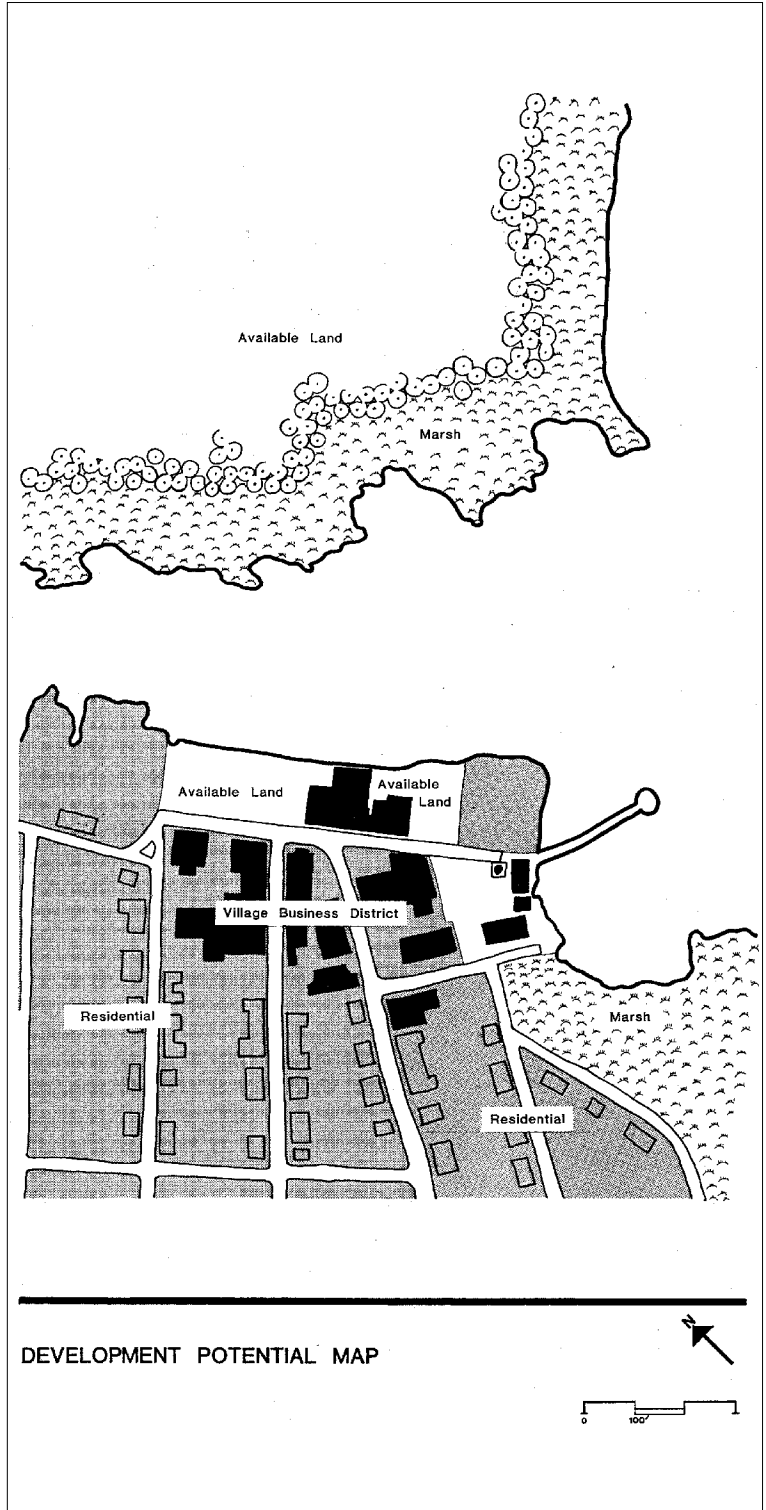
Even residents outwardly took the *sacred places*. This partially explained why the planning and legal mechanisms didn't include them. These places were not distant enough in time or separable enough from daily life to be consciously seen as special. Their value resided in the community's subconscious and loomed large in conscious minds of locals only after four things happened.

- **First**, the places were threatened. As the town declined, some of the *sacred places*, particularly the waterfront, likewise suffered. Lack of maintenance and use made it unrecognizable. But gradual decline is difficult to grasp as a threat. Only after we began talking about the changes necessary for economic recovery did

**FG. 2. C** Development Potential Map

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**SL. 2. C.** Zemljovid potencijalnog razvoja





town leaders and then other residents realize that their community was in transition. The dramatic scope of the proposed plans forced people to think about the social institutions and the environments that mattered most to them.

- **Second**, the places were legitimized. We discovered that the residents had emotional attachments to many places that they knew differed from the media images of good environments. At first we thought this was the distinction between ordinary vernacular and high-style architecture. But we made a mistaken oversimplification. The good environment the media projects to people is the upper middle class suburb with residential areas neatly segregated from modern shopping facilities that people always must drive to. Not a single sacred place matched this image. Residents also knew of the disparity between places they subconsciously valued and places outsiders of high status valued. Many visitors came, and still come, to Manteo expecting something as quaint as Williamsburg. The town disappoints them and they say so, making residents feel that the homey sacred places badly reflect on the community.

When we figured out that residents felt somewhat ashamed of these places, we knew that it was important for us outside design experts to say these places were fine. Otherwise residents would tell us only about the places tourists valued, and we would never uncover the truly important ones. In the survey, we asked residents to list places that most contributed to Manteo's image. In most cases these were not the same as the places valued by the residents. Valued places are frequently ordinary looking, making them difficult for designers to identify.

- **Third**, a collective picture of the valued places was presented to the residents. The list of *sacred places*, the map and the simple name, *Sacred Structure*, overcame this. It was similar to putting up a land use map; neighborhood residents who intimately know some parts of the total land pattern, but not all of it, frequently remark: "I didn't know the business district extended all that way." Manteo's map turned special places into a pattern, previously experienced but not grasped as a whole. The name, *Sacred Structure* of Manteo, was one resident's way of simplifying the whole. The *Sacred Structure* entered the local vocabulary and people debated it along with such topics as job opportunities and the property tax benefits of tourism. The community's unconscious concern about special places had become part of the collective and now open conscious expression.

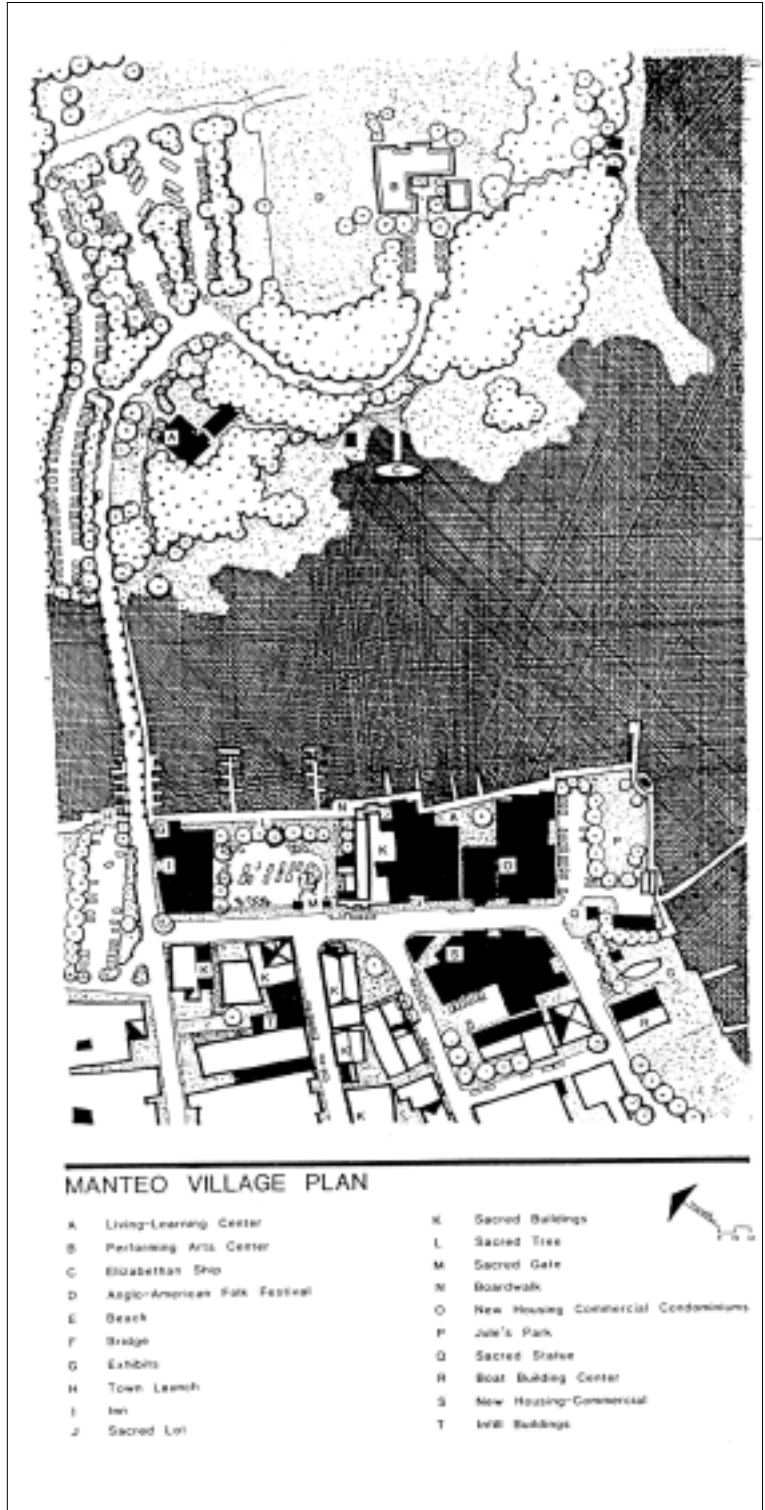
- **Fourth**, residents consecrated the places. This required separating the most important places from the less valued ones. Townspeople did this systematically by responding to the newspaper survey and by refining the list throughout the planning process. By the time we completed the design plans, residents had designated the most valued places as inviolable; not to be changed in any way to accommodate new development.

This, of course, required sacrifice. Economic development would suffer to the extent residents judged any project incompatible with the *Sacred Structure*. Today, we estimate that preserving it costs the town over a half million dollars in annual retail sales alone. This sacrifice seemed essential in consecrating the places. The newspaper editor reconfirmed this when he repeatedly said

**FG. 2. D** Manteo Village Plan

Made by • Izradio  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 2. D.** Plan naselja  
Manteo Village



these places had a higher value than just calculated in dollars.

I should point out that these four steps in making conscious unconsciously valued places seem essential only in retrospect. As we went through the process in Manteo, we were uncertain about what to do because we had no precedents; but having now identified sacred structures in additional communities, these four steps do seem essential in raising their unconscious value to a conscious level for public action.

### **How the *Sacred Structure* Influenced Planning and Design Decisions**

After we presented the *Sacred Structure map* to the planning board, it became part of the formal discussion, influencing planning decisions in several ways.

- **First**, much of the talk about cultural heritage produces sets of principles too abstract for public discussion and too far removed for community action. We avoided that pitfall. The *Sacred Structure* transformed the typically vague discussion about loss of valued lifestyles and landscapes into a focused and specific debate about what sites to change or keep in order to reap the benefits of tourism. The *Sacred Structure Map* depicted important social patterns and cultural settings more effectively than any other planning document. Most places essential to Manteo's social life were not included in other town documents; not in the zoning ordinance, not in the visual inventory, not in the list of historic sites.

- **Second**, residents used the *Sacred Structure Inventory* to objectively evaluate plans in terms of impact on their lives. They could tell if some development violated sacred places. For example, they deemed one plan unacceptable because it required changing Bicentennial Park (95% of the survey respondents said that even minor changes in the park were unacceptable).

- **Third**, the *Sacred Structure* directed the final plan chosen. Of the 7 plans we developed for the village center, residents chose one with somewhat less economic potential specifically because the plan preserved more of the *Sacred Structure* and interrupted fewer of their accustomed life patterns and rituals. The *Sacred Structure* inspired weaving the tourist and local places together with a living-learning boardwalk while maintaining Jule's Park, the Creef-Davis boat works, the gravel parking lot for their existing uses. It also inspired the new development's visual quality. Locals continue to add new touches. As a result, the development is intimate and small in scale.

- **Fourth**, the *Sacred Structure* provided the basis for negotiation with outside developers who proposed inappropriately scaled projects. Because the valued places were dispersed throughout the waterfront, their preservation precluded wholesale urban redevelopment. Developers balked at this because it required small parcel development.

We had produced a *Guide for Development* for Manteo that stated the town's intention to preserve the *Sacred Structure*. This provided performance criteria for development consistent with it. Using the guide, the town board emphasized to developers the importance of preserving the valued places and building within

the existing community framework. For example, the town convinced developers to do infill development that enhanced the *sacred places* rather than raze buildings for a larger scale commercial development.<sup>4</sup>

**Fifth**, the *Sacred Structure* provided the basis for ongoing citizen evaluation of zoning and development proposals. In a debate over the development of a new marina, residents showed the *Sacred Structure survey results* that said 65% of the townspeople preferred improved boat ramps and docks for locals over more docks for tourists. The private marina was delayed.

Throughout the planning process the *Sacred Structure* played a critical role. Because these places embodied the existing social life, habits, rituals and institutions as well as the collective memory of life, they were singularly useful in describing the essence of Manteo's life in ways applicable to decision making. How the *Sacred Structure* would fare over time, remained a serious question. Was the notion of *sacred places* so transcendent that the idea would soon be forgotten and be overrun by economic considerations? It was on my mind recently as I returned there to evaluate my work.

### The Town Today: The Processional Entry

Getting to Manteo always revealed the town's essence. In 1584 it required a several month long sea voyage. Even today with freeways and bridges, the final 30 miles emphasizes the isolation and enhances the mystique and romance of the place. The landscape elements are so bold and simple that they establish a pilgrimage processional, a ritualistic rhythm. Open fields extending to the horizon alternate with even-age pine forests all the way to the expanse of the Alligator River.

Once over the river the landscape is again enclosed by pine forests with a drainage canal of black water paralleling the road. On Roanoke island the pine forest once more totally encloses with womblike clarity and primeval forest fear. In accordance with our plan, the state legislature has designated this an historic corridor. Newly planted but sizable live oaks form a five mile long allee. No development, not even a modest billboard, can be seen from the road. Near the town limits the allee changes from grand and wild live oaks to more domesticated crape myrtle.

The entry processional and the juxtaposition of unconquered wilderness with the town's built environment, so important to the town's identity, are more dramatic than when I last visited, thanks to the sensitive implementation of the historic corridor legislation. This guarantees preservation of important parts of the *Sacred Structure* and that the town will maintain a clear edge between the built and natural environments. It prevents sprawl and encourages the infill which is apparent everywhere. As I drive along the main highway through Manteo, I estimate that a quarter of the entire development is new infill giving strip development a continuous, near urban, quality.

### The Town Today: Its Health

Manteo looks healthier than at any time since I have known it. Once empty stores are bustling. I can't find any vacancies downtown (25% of the properties were empty eight years ago). There is a lot of life on the streets. People are out walking, shopping.

<sup>4</sup> Randolph T. Hester, Jr., et al.: *Guide for Development: Public Report Three; Town of Manteo, North Carolina* (1981).



An older couple passes on their daily exercise walk. There are blacks as well as whites, plus teenagers on bikes. Merchants, even ones who opposed the plan initially, consistently told me they had excellent business now. The city clerk informed me that the tax rate has remained basically unchanged since our plan was conceived. Its implementation has stimulated enough successful development that the rate, once among the state's highest, is now appropriately average. Many more people are working. The unemployment has been halved countywide. Jobs come from the boat building industry, tourism and other new businesses, the state park and county government.

The poorer and black neighborhoods have received public investments but are luckily not being gentrified. Streets have been paved and people have fixed up houses. A new park provides both recreation and a commemoration of important black history on Roanoke Island. The community just finished about 100 units of subsidized housing to provide for elderly and moderate income people who would otherwise be squeezed out as the town prospers.

There is everywhere a pride in Manteo. One person told me "there is a pride in being part of a vision that makes everyone from doctors to garbage collectors want to do their job well".

### The Town Today: The Sacred Structure

Much change has occurred in Manteo, but the sacred places are largely unchanged. The marsh remains untouched, reminding me how critical the water's edge is in defining the town's northern

**FG. 3.** Citizen grassroots involvement and a number of small scale projects, instead of a large scale one, were the key to the success of Manteo's development plans. Both, residents and tourists, can feel comfortable walking along the attractive shoreline and across the footbridge to visit the boats, boat building areas and shops that line the waterfront.

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 3.** Ključ uspješnosti razvojnih planova Mantea bilo je uključivanje širokog sloja građanstva i velik broj malih projekata umjesto jednoga velikog. I stanovnici i turisti mogu se ugodno osjećati šetajući se uzduž uređene obale i pješačkog mosta, kako bi posjetili lučicu, malo brodogradilište ili prodavaonice na samoj obali.

**FG. 4.** Manteo's new boardwalk has reconnected the town to its waterfront. Formerly, marginally economic warehouse buildings stood between the downtown and the bay, but now waterfront and downtown activities are fully integrated.

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 4.** Nova pješačka staza izvedena od brodskog poda ponovno je povezala grad s obalom. Nekad su se između gradskoga gospodarskog središta i zaljeva prostirala skladišta maloga gospodarskog značenja, ali su sada obala i poslovno središte potpuno sjedinjeni.



limit. The town launch has been rebuilt with a new concrete launching pad. Across the street the post office has its familiar congestion because people still lingered to meet friends and exchange news. Old men were checking out the water from the gravel parking lot. Local festivals are still held there. Teens hung out at the docks as always. Judging by these places it appears that life has not changed at all.

Jule's Park, the homemade labor of love in the middle of all the new development, houses, a new playground and the recycled brick rubble edges have been cemented into place. But the concrete cross that Jule Burrus found in the old high school's ruins remains the waterfront's focal point. The overall quality of this homemade park establishes the design style for the entire waterfront. This has prevented new projects from being too pretentious or up-scale and probably explains why local people feel comfortable in and patronize the stores in the recent commercial developments.

Other local actions reveal the *Sacred Structure's* importance. Fearings Soda Shop, identified as a sacred place, burned beyond repair in 1981. Defying economic projections, the owners rebuilt it because they said it provided a daily gathering spot essential to the town's life.

When the owners renovated another sacred place, the *Duchess* Restaurant, they considered removing a counter and circular table where locals gathered every morning for coffee and political discussions. The local architect and interior designer—well aware of the *Sacred Structure's* importance—suggested an alternative that saved them both. Community members have consistently taken similar actions to save and enhance what they now call the sacred spots.

The *Sacred Structure* remains firmly fixed in the residents' collective awareness and has been carefully preserved. More importantly, local people indicate that the *Sacred Structure* has allowed the town to reap the benefits of growth without negatively impacting its way of life.



**FG. 5.** Part of Manteo's economic development strategy was to encourage residents to engage in their traditional crafts. For centuries Manteo residents had built fine wooden boats, now they build them again as tourists watch.

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 5.** Jedna od planiranih smjernica gospodarskog razvoja Mantea bila je i ideja o poticanju stanovnika da se ponovno počnu baviti tradicionalnim obrtima. Naime, stoljećima su stanovnici Mantea gradili odlične drvene brodove, a sada ih ponovno grade pred očima turista.

## The Town Today: Intimate Friendships

As I conducted interviews, the primacy of rekindled friendships struck me over and over again. I had spent two years there as a planner and landscape architect but I had not returned in over six years except for a brief visit. Even though I had a predetermined set of questions, each interview was more like a family reunion. People would drop in and say hello. We talked about friends for at least half of every session. For all of us it had been a special time, dreaming an impossible dream for an impoverished town and then laboring to make it come true. Much time had passed. Children were now in high school. Supporters had died. Some had become more successful. The interviews with people I had known were surprising because they too, in spite of my questions, focused on people. They explained the successes and failures of the plan in terms of people.

Suddenly I realized that the distractions from my predetermined questions were the essence of the work in Manteo. It reminded

**FG. 6.** The view of local fishing and crab industry

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 6.** Pogled na lokalno uzgajalište riba i rakova



**FG. 7.** The view of the performance meadow

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 7.** Pogled na poljanu za lokalne priredbe



me that I had not been so much a professional consultant as a part of the community. People remembered me more as a friend than as a problem solver partly because we had become friends and partly because I had helped them solve their problems rather than solving them myself. That is a simple principle of community design that we should wisely not forget. Had I not been so directly involved with the people and their place, I would never have discovered their valued places and they likely would have lost them.

### The Town Today: The Politics of Change

Most people who had been actively involved saw the events in Manteo as a political struggle. The town board members involved in conceiving, planning and funding the first phase of what is now remembered as "the dream" were re-elected after adopting the plan. They had widespread community support since people felt they were part of something special. The plan to improve the long suffering economic development through historic tourism and preservation of the *Sacred Structure* brought state and national attention, even previously uninvolved residents caught the enthusiasm.

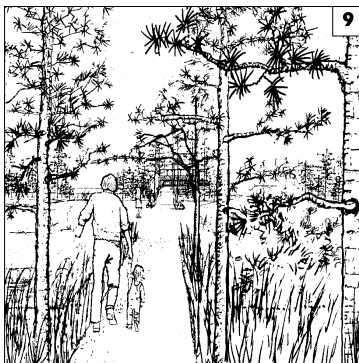
Several years of slow progress wore on the community and residents elected opposers and doubters to the town board. The new leadership berated the previous vision as too fancy but offered little in its place. As residents recounted this political roller coaster ride, almost everyone noted that all parties had supported preservation of the *sacred places*. This struck me as important because, in the face of change, the *Sacred Structure* had remained a constant. It maintained the social life of the community and also provided a singular point of agreement in an acrimonious political period.

Because the various leaders all supported preservation of the *Sacred Structure* and saw it as the inspiration for new development, they used it throughout the planning and design process. Only 5, of the 17 most valued places, could be protected by existing legal mechanisms (historic preservation and appearance legislation, the Coastal Act and the local zoning ordinance). If people had the slightest disagreement about the importance of the sacred places, it would have jeopardized their legal protection. We developed piecemeal legal protection using 4 mechanisms to reduce the *Sacred Structure's* legal vulnerability.





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**FG. 8.** The view of the public supported industry and craft start-up space

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**SL. 8.** Pogled na proizvodnju koja ima javnu potporu, sa prostorom na kojemu se započinje bavljenje obrtom

**FG. 9.** The view of the historic walk

Source • Izvor  
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

**SL. 9.** Pogled na povijesni put

The town then formally adopted the *Guide for Development*, which spelled out the intent to preserve the *Sacred Structure*. The *Guide* was then incorporated into the local *Coastal Area Management Plan* to strengthen the *Sacred Structure's* legal status. But these were symbolic actions because none of the appropriate state enabling legislation specified the *Sacred Structure*. The legal mechanism the town had relied on most was the creation of a business district in the area where 14 of the sacred places are located. For approval of the conditional use permit required for all new development there, developers must demonstrate that local access to the *Sacred Structure* will not be negatively affected. The conditions are articulated in the *Guide for Development*.

## Conclusions: What can we learn from Manteo that would be useful elsewhere?

### Observation One: A Contribution to Social Design

The *Sacred Structure* represents a small yet valuable breakthrough in social design, particularly in reconciling tourism with existing community mores and rituals. In fact, the *Sacred Structure inventory* is an important mechanism for any neighborhood or city in rapid transition that wishes to maintain valued lifestyles and places. The recording of such patterns underscores the fact that everyone has sacred landscapes essential to a community's healthy survival.

The *Sacred Structure* was a significant factor in the planning decisions in Manteo. It raised valued community places to the same level as economic, technical and political considerations. The resulting community development plan permitted the town to benefit from tourism and protect fragile local institutions from tourist encroachment. It encouraged continuous local control, too. The use of these subconsciously valued places to guide large-scale community change provides an important precedent in social design. The *Sacred Structure* helps fit what might otherwise be overpowering economic development into a specific place context. By forcing changes to occur in small increments around the sacred places, the *Sacred Structure* disperses them, lessening their impact. In addition, the smaller projects present benefits that accrue to the local community in terms of financing, material and service supply and jobs.

The success, however, is subtle in Manteo. For example, at a recent tourist event attracting nearly 10,000 visitors, local people

still could walk to the post office, crab and swim at the waterfront and have a leisurely breakfast at the *Duchess* in the section reserved for locals.

The *Sacred Structure* also allows the community to maintain its identity as it changes: to look like itself. Manteo is not as unified visually as most towns that go for tourism. To the extent that the design of the built environment concretizes values, the emerging community of Manteo looks unusually like what its residents wanted because the *Sacred Structure* both preserved the old and inspired new buildings and landscapes.

### **Observation Two: The Need for Legislation to Protect Sacred Places**

Clearly, communities need new legal mechanisms to help preserve their social structures in the face of rapid tourist development. Zoning, appearance, historic district and Coastal management mechanisms do not preserve the "place" essence of the small town social life. By providing land use separation, zoning protects Manteo's sacred places from the grossest incompatibilities, but little else.

Local governments desperately need state legislation that will facilitate preserving valued landscapes and lifestyles that represents not just their sense of place but also significantly supports the community's social life. Sometimes existing mechanisms actually work against protection for the locally valued landscapes, as in Manteo, where the Lynch-based image-of-the-city mapping (frequently used as the basis of appearance legislation) identified landmarks that lacked significant meanings to locals.<sup>5</sup> In the same way, many suburban standards, unwittingly adopted into small town or city ordinances, likewise undermine sacred places. Similarly, historic preservation legislation protected only 10% of Manteo's sacred places. And, although North Carolina Coastal Zone Management laws mandate identification of sites of local cultural importance, the laws only protect historic and ecologically fragile sites.

### **Observation Three: Questions About Equity**

One troublesome question arises from this type of social preservation: can the preservation of valued places reinforce undemocratic social patterns such as economic or social segregation? In some cases this is likely, in the same ways that towns use zoning and historic preservation to exclude "undesirables" directly or psychologically. Topophilia might provide a polite and updated justification for racial segregation. Even in Manteo, the new highway strip development is more racially and economically integrated than the village, where most of the *Sacred Structure* is located.

In communities with widespread injustices, the preservation of sacred places would prolong them. And in communities trying to overcome an unhealthy past, or in suburban ones suffering from environmental anomie, *Sacred Structure* identification might be a painful and divisive effort. But for many small towns in transition, the identification and preservation of sacred places can be a key to a successful metamorphosis that builds on, rather than destroys, the existing sense of community.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*; MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1960).

**Sažetak • Summary****Gospodarski napredak uz očuvanje zajednice**

Primjer grada Mantea, Sjeverna Karolina, SAD

Mnogi ruralni gradići u Sjedinjenim Državama nazaduju zbog gospodarskih, tehnoloških i prometnih promjena te zbog nestanka prirodnih resursa. To često razorno utječe na stanovništvo, uzrokujući gubitak radnih mjesta, raspad obitelji, gubitak identiteta i građanskih funkcija. Strategije usmjerene na spašavanje takvih gradova priljevom vanjskog kapitala i gospodarskim restrukturiranjem da bi se privukla nova i strana industrija te potaknula urbana izgradnja često upropaštavaju mjesnu kulturu. U gradiću Manteo u Sjevernoj Karolini primijenjen je kreativni pristup u sklopu kojega su prastare tradicije i lokacije nadahnule novi razvoj gospodarstva zasnovana na gradnji drvenih brodova.

Procjena tog procesa, i korištenje metodologijom kojom su građani uključeni u rad i rezultata gotovog projekta upućuju na opći uspjeh tehnike u prepoznavanju najvrednijih mjesta, tzv. *svete strukture grada*. Ta su mjesta stjecišta današnje kulture određene zajednice, svakidašnjih navika i posebnih rituala koji su građanima bitni za kolektivni osjećaj identiteta. Ta je *sveta struktura* nadahnula planere pri izradi novoga gradskog plana utemeljenog na lokalnoj kulturi. Plan je rezultirao gospodarskim razvojem, većom zaposlenošću i očuvanjem lokalnog osjećaja za mjesto.

U prepoznavanju *svetih struktura* najvažnijim se čini sljedeće:

1. *sveta struktura* je točno određena tvorevina, a većina javnih rasprava o kulturnom naslijeđu vrlo je neodređena. Određenost mjesta i društvene funkcije nadahnuli su oblik i raspored razvojnih planova;

2. stanovnicima je *sveta struktura* bila mjerilo za procjenu alternativnih planova;

3. usvojen je plan koji je maksimalno očuvao *svetu strukturu*, čak i uz cijenu manjega gospodarskog gubitka, što je građanima bilo draže.

4. *sveta struktura* bila je temelj za pregovore s privatnim gospodarstvenicima koji su predlagali projekte neodgovarajuće veličine ili razmještaja.

5. *sveta struktura* polazište je za daljnje sudjelovanje građana u raspravama o planiranju, zoniranju i izgradnji grada.

**Randolph T. Hester, Jr.**

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