

Annapolis Vernacular: Case Studies in Traditional Craft and Rural Planning Seeking Native Strategies for Sustainable Design and Community Building

This thesis professes the value in studying vernacular architecture and applying the lessons therein to contemporary designs for buildings, landscapes, and communities. Vernacular architecture and landscape is a local expression of life, land, and culture: it is informed by a way of life and economic system rooted in production and commerce, it is resultant of years of climate and material adaptation specific to the land, and it is reflective of a culture as a whole and of the spirit of the individual craftsman. Architects such as Wright, Scarpa, Zumthor, and others have been so successful in their designs because of intimate knowledge of the vernacular and craftsmen traditions of the regions they worked in. While this is not a new process, it has come into disuse, even though the results that come out of it are always different for every unique site and time period. Annapolis, Maryland was chosen as the area of study for its dramatic riparian topography, its rich Chesapeake culture, its wide variety of traditional mid-Atlantic vernacular architecture, and its mix of agricultural and suburban zones. After careful analysis of several everyday buildings and landscapes including a market, farmhouse, tobacco curing barn, family farm, and even beaver dam, all dating back over two hundred years, (except the beaver dam), it was decided to use Quiet Waters Park as the site because of its status as public land, its history as a farm, its vast unused fields, its critical proximity to the bay, and its central location between two residential communities. And to explore the idea of traditionally inspired, productive landscapes, a contemporary market and working farm complex was chosen as the program. With this site and this program in mind several goals became evident: to create an architecture that belongs to the Annapolis area and to the craftsman therein, to teach people about sustainable farming techniques and traditional ones, to improve the health of the bay by reducing nitrogen runoff in riparian zones, to bring two isolated communities together with a central park, to involve people with the local production and sale of goods, to provide a more natural location for the Anne Arundel County farmers market, and to ensure the continued use and historic preservation of the park.

Paul Baines

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Committee: Adnan Morshed, Carlos Reimers)