

Architectural Design 3.2 and 3.3

Winter/Spring 2019 | Architecture Department | Cal Poly | Instructor: Kent Macdonald

Paradise Redux: Urban Design Assignments, Part Two

We will now move to developing a **town vision plan** for Paradise. Such a plan is conceptual and somewhat vague: it lays out a framework for development in broad strokes rather than stating specifically what goes where, lot by lot. Even this kind of plan may seem intimidating, but you must know by now that architecture proceeds in stages: the beginning is always filled with uncertainty but over time – and in repeated iterations – a project gains certainty.

To start developing the plan, we first need to establish some goals for what it should accomplish. To do that, we need to analyze the research you did in the preceding phase – demographics, climate, economics, land use patterns, etc. – and try to draw some conclusions from it. At the same time, you need to process all the information you gleaned from the various interactive sessions in Chico, as well as from the tour of Paradise itself. You heard many stories and got lots of conflicting views from stakeholders, and the tour was shocking. Now you need to make sense of what you've seen and heard and, like good planners or architects, assess their meanings in order to discern what the future of Paradise should be.

We'll work in three stages over the next week on this vision plan. First, on your own, you'll establish what you think are the most important goals for Paradise's future development. Next, in groups of three, you'll combine those goals and, drawing from the precedents you researched as well as some new ones, develop a series of rough scenarios, eventually settling on one that you think best resolves the goals you set out in the first stage. Finally, as a class on Friday, we'll share the six scenarios with each other and, taking the best aspects of each, create a common vision plan. Or two.

Once that is accomplished, you'll consider (a) the area where you would like to focus your attention, and (b) the type of building(s) you would like to design. In the days after that, I'll put you in contact with the firms in San Francisco, to which you'll present your research, the rough vision plan, and your choice for a building type, for an initial **professional shakedown**.

1A. TASK ONE: GOALSETTING and A SHOT IN THE DARK

(Individual assignment, due Wednesday, January 23, at noon, and uploaded to PL)

Reflect back on all that you've seen and heard in the last two weeks – your research, your meetings with stakeholders, or our bus and walking tour of Paradise – and identify seven of the most noteworthy aspects of life in the town before the fire. Consider different aspects of living there, such as the relationship of Paradise to its natural surroundings; its sense of place (or lack thereof); street network; recreation, shopping, employment, and educational opportunities; neighborhood structure; and so on.

These aspects could be positive or negative, and they may even conflict with each other depending on your sources. In any event, include the things that give us your take on how life was lived in Paradise. For example:

Several people said they never walked anywhere in the town; they had to drive everywhere.

Next, offer three “antidotes” to each of the aspects you describe above, that is, either a revision to the physical organization of the town as a whole or a specific intervention that seeks to mitigate the harmful impacts of any negative features or, conversely, that seeks to enhance the benefits of any positive features. Thus, for our example above, you might say:

Concentrate buildings in specific areas; build sidewalks so people can walk safely on the side of the roads; create bike trails through the town as alternatives to roadways.

Finally, from these antidotes, establish seven overarching goals for the town, ones that encapsulate what life in the town should look like in the future. For example:

The new town should allow people to walk no more than ten minutes to buy a quart of milk, attend an evening class, or meet a friend for a cup of coffee.

Create similar “livability” or “quality of life” goals for each of the seven aspects you identified above.

Finally, looking at the goals you've developed, consider if they suggest an underlying theme or approach that you might utilize in your design of the vision plan. Should the new Paradise be a vacation wonderland, a retirement community, or a bedroom community for Millennials with children? What will get Paradise back on its feet – as a place where people can live comfortably in safety, as well as a place where people will want to visit? This is your **Shot in the Dark**, a first pass at attempting to identify an overarching theme, or perhaps set of themes, for Paradise: its new brand.

Write these on letter-sized paper, upload to PolyLearn by noon on Wednesday, and bring a printed copy to class.

1B. TASK TWO: GIVING SHAPE TO YOUR GOALS (In groups of three, due Friday, January 25 at noon)

Working in groups of three, look over your goals for the town and consolidate them, removing any redundancies but also identifying any conflicts. For those, see if you can “consense” around a new set of common goals related to the issues that you first addressed in Task 1A.

Next, using colored pens, pencils, and lots of trace over a large map of the town (fitted to a scale that works on 36 x 36 paper), work to give physical form to the goals you’ve established. You should cycle through a number of alternatives quickly; this work is meant to be messy. You’re brainstorming. In any event, consider the following as a way of jump-starting your work:

- *Should the new town be the way it was – that is, rather low density and dispersed – or should it be more urban? Conversely, should it even less urban, perhaps more like Sea Ranch with protected, unbuilt zones in and around it?*
- *Should the new town have a distinctive architectural presence (Seaside) or should it blend in with the surroundings (Sea Ranch)? Put another way: should there be an overall formality to the town (radial, linear) or should it not be organized in any particular or immediately recognizable way (organic)?*
- *Should the town have a distinctive town center (Lake Anne Village) or should there be smaller neighborhood centers dispersed throughout? If so, what kinds of institutions or uses might anchor each center?*
- *Are public institutions (city hall, police station, fire house, hospital, schools) centralized or dispersed?*
- *Should the town have distinct boundaries? Should the neighborhoods have distinct boundaries?*
- *What types of housing should there be? If there are different types, should they be dispersed by type or mixed in with each other? Could you – or should you – use housing to build up the fabric of the town?*
- *Should there be a hierarchy of street types? What should be the character of each type? Can you diagram them in section? How might these be arranged throughout the town?*
- *Thinking about Kevin Lynch’s five elements (see reading on PolyLearn), identify the major nodes, landmarks, edges, districts, and paths already in the town or where they should be in the future.*

Remember: this is a brainstorming exercise, so there are no wrong idea, only better or worse ones!

1C. TASK THREE: CONSOLIDATION (As a class, due Monday, January 28, at noon)

In class on Friday, we’ll review the different town vision plans from the six teams. If we can, we’ll “consense” (that word again) around one scheme.

Given, however, that architecture moves from uncertainty to certainty (see the first paragraph of this hand-out), and that we are still in *terra incognita* (unknown territory), let’s see what Friday brings. I prefer not to have more than three vision plans from the class, but let’s see how this all shakes out. In the following week, you’ll decide on the location of your buildings – as well as their type. Moreover, we’ll put you in touch with your firms for a first review via Skype, Zoom, etc.

