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Singing River Island, Post-Katrina Proposals for the Naval Station, Pascagoula MI

In the fall 2005 lecturer Alice Mueller got her architecture and city planning studios collaborating in developing design contributions for redeveloping efforts in Pascagoula, Mississippi in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. This innovative interdepartmental collaboration generated proposals for redeveloping Singing River Island and reutilizing its Pascagoula Naval Station, closed by a Federal administration decision.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Cal Poly Architecture and Planning Students have responded to a September 9th USA Headline: “Mayor Worries FEMA Overlooking Pascagoula.” The students adopted the community of Pascagoula, Mississippi, for the Fall 2005 Arch 351 (Third Year Architecture Design Studio) and CRP 341 (Third Year Community Design Lab) studio projects. The community had not only suffered devastation from Katrina, but had been further decimated by the Federal Base Realignment Closure Commission’s decision to close the Pascagoula Naval Station. The Station is located in Singing River Island at the mouth of the harbor for the City of Pascagoula.

Students divided themselves into five interdisciplinary teams with the goal of creating five distinctive sustainable redevelopment plans for the Pascagoula Naval Station. Their vision is to revitalize a community through principles of economic development, sustainability, renewable energy, and ecological restoration. Each proposal links Singing River Island to a revitalized pedestrian-friendly mixed-use downtown, via an Inter-Modal Waterfront Transit Center, serviced by a Ferry System. The students hope that their Singing River Island Proposals, for the redevelopment of the Pascagoula Naval Station, will serve as the lynchpin for the rejuvenation of the community.

The City of Pascagoula is located between the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Pensacola, Florida. According to the 2000 Census the city has over 26,200 residents. Pascagoula is currently a major Gulf Coast shipping port, and also features several shipyards. The proximity to the coast and the low elevation of the city has and will make Pascagoula a target for large-scale natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina.

Step One: Disaster Assessment

Project teams gathered data on the consequences rendered by Hurricane Katrina by utilizing information about Pascagoula from the internet. Locating newspaper print articles, TV/

cable footage, newspaper/TV/cable/radio websites, chamber of commerce websites, tourism websites, real estate websites, federal/state/local government websites, relief agency websites, blogs, and Google Earth have proven to be invaluable tools.

Step Two: Case Studies

Two different series of case study typologies were undertaken by project teams. The first series focused on five communities at the forefront of sustainable development, the innovative communities of Battery Park (New York), Civano (Arizona), Malmo (Sweden), Celebration (Florida), and Stapleton (Colorado). The second series of case studies examined military bases that have been closed recently and were converted into private developments. Five former military bases converted into sustainable master planned communities were studied: El Toro, Great Park, Noisette, Baldwin Park, and The Glen. Many of these cases are former brownfield sites. These studies proved to be invaluable sources in educating the project teams to prepare innovative master plans for Pascagoula and sustainable developments in their Singing River Island Proposals.

Step Three: Site Analysis

The Pascagoula Naval Station site was analyzed by gathering data from aerial photographs, Naval Station Websites, GIS Data, and various historical archives. The information was vital to the teams so that proposed sustainable development plans may mitigate hazards, maximize the site’s resources, utilize renewable energy, and strengthen mainland connections. Opportunities and constraints were documented for each project team’s proposals.

Step Four: Guiding Principles

Project teams listed a series of principles that they then applied to each of their development Proposals, based on the 2004 Strategic Plan of the City of Pascagoula.

Step Five: Proposals

The Interdisciplinary Project Teams created five proposals for the redevelopment of the Pascagoula Naval Station.

First Master Proposal

This proposal draws on ideas currently in use in the Netherlands in order to mitigate the effects of hurricanes and floods. Amphibious buildings are designed to float in the event of a flood and are one of the newest concepts in flood-mitigation for developments. The team proposed a new Performing Arts Center on Singing River Island, connected by a Ferry System, to a revitalized Mixed-Use Downtown. The students envision people downtown dining in restaurants, strolling through shops and galleries, and taking leisurely ferry rides to cultural performances on Singing River Island. The mixed-use downtown would include a new theatre and commercial node, a civic node, a new mixed-use housing district, and an aesthetically pleasing watershed canal doubling for storm water drainage, wetland restoration, and open public space. Development on the island would be limited to the performing arts center and a marina to mitigate the cost of future storm damage. By incorporating solar panels, rooftop gardens, recycled water, native landscaping, storm water retention, permeable pavement, and a pedestrian-friendly environment, this group feels that concepts in sustainability can be included.

Second Master Proposal

This project team proposed a sustainable casino including a marina. Ferry Service, via a new Waterfront Multi-Modal Transit Station, would link Singing River Island to the Downtown and other Gulf Coast Communities. Casino employees will have a priority for below-market housing, above restaurants, shops, and galleries in the revitalized Downtown.

Third Master Proposal

This proposal included a resort hotel with a water park located in a remote part of Singing River Island. The Water Park will be an amenity enjoyed by both resort hotel visitors and by citizens of the various Gulf Coast Communities. This project, specifically the water park, would be a demonstration model for renewable energy sources and sustainability principles. The development will use recycled water, solar panels, native landscaping, and green building materials. Singing River Island would be connected to Downtown Pascagoula, with its restaurants, shops, and cultural amenities, by a ferry system to a waterfront multi-modal transit station.



Figure 1: Master Plan proposal, Team 1.



Figure 2: Circulation Plan proposal, Team 3.

Fourth Master Proposal

Proposal Four seeks to infuse the Pascagoula Community with a variety of economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities through the process of transforming the Pascagoula Naval Station into a local, regional, and worldwide destination as an eco-resort and spa. The Singing River Island Eco Resort and Spa would include botanical gardens, planted with native species noted for their rejuvenating powers so that they might be used in the spa treatments. Many of the existing abandoned Ingalls Shipyard Buildings at the Western Harbor would be renovated into a mixed-use complex which includes restaurants, retail space, offices, and housing. Spa employees would live in this new complex overlooking the waterfront. The revitalized Ingrass Shipyard Project would connect by a trolley system to the Downtown, the Beach Park, and other Pascagoula neighborhoods through a waterfront multi-modal transit station. Ferry service would be provided to Singing River Island.

Fifth Master Proposal

Proposal Five combined the natural environment, a culinary school, and diverse dining experiences to create a lively atmosphere that capitalizes on the strong Gulf Coast tradition of cooking, music, and a reliance on the land and the water. This team's vision is to create a place of education and entertainment in an interconnected sustainable environment. Housing for students and employees would be provided in the revitalized downtown, above restaurants, shops, art galleries, and other neighborhood icons, and in the revitalized Ingalls Shipyard Mixed-Use Project. An Organic Garden would not only provide food for the culinary school and restaurants, but it would also rejuvenate the island landscape. The Island would be served by a natural Wastewater Reclamation System. Restaurants would serve as demonstration models for renewable energy and sustainable building principles under the guise of entertainment and dining enjoyment. The Island's Foundation would subsidize the cost of public transportation for its students and employees. One of the goals of the 2004 Pascagoula Strategic Plan is to provide for vocational education. In this regard culinary school graduates will be able to work in the neighboring communities, especially those supported by large Casinos and Resorts.

Epilogue

Each Project Team designed a project which exemplifies design excellence, sustainable principles, and cutting-edge technology. They have engaged in collaborative partnerships,

consulting with faculty and students in the disciplines of Civil Engineering, Architectural Engineering, Construction Management, Landscape Architecture, and Business. The teams have presented their proposals through large-format posters, drawings, and models. The work of each project team has been formed into a final report entitled "Singing River Island, The Vision: Five Proposals for the Pascagoula Naval Station, Post-Katrina." A local television station has filmed the presentation and featured it on the evening news. Mayor Avara, and the citizens of Pascagoula can be assured that they were not overlooked, nor will they ever be forgotten, by these thirty-five students who enthusiastically sent them their compiled work in a final class report as a New Year's present.

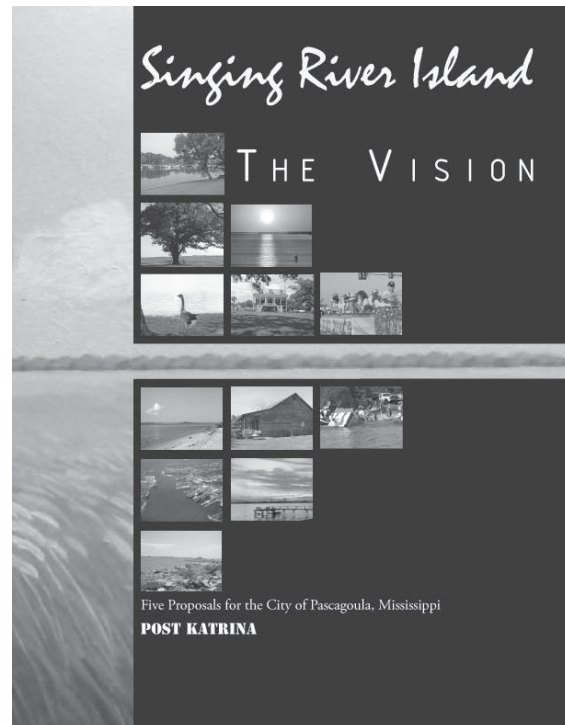


Figure 3: The cover of the final class report.