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ENVS 301: Environmental Practicum
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Research and Design for a Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks Visitor Center

Methods:

For this paper, I plan to outline my research and describe the opportunity of implementing a visitor center for the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks on a small portion of frontage land on the Meritor property. I will begin my paper by reiterating the strong potential of Hopewell EarthWorks receiving the UNESCO World Heritage status. In order to prepare for such an honor, I wanted to explore how this will affect Heath and Newark in regard to increased tourism. As well as, how research supports that a visitor center is a necessary point of action for sustained tourism and revenue growth. With this research foundation, I will conduct a case study of Stonehenge, Cahokia Mounds, and Poverty point. All three of these UNESCO World Heritage sites share similar characteristics and will support the importance of a visitor center for tourism and the Licking County community. With the inspiration of these UNESCO World Heritage sites and others I will create and attach a graphic for a potential design for the visitor center. So, for the last section of my paper I will describe this graphic and the decisions I made during the process of creation. All in all, I am delighted to research and design the potentials of a visitor center on the 444 Hebron Road property as this is likely to become a reality for the site.

Results:

UNESCO World Heritage Research

Since Phase One of Environmental Practicum, we have included a visitor center in every proposal for the Meritor Site. As the Heath historical site across the street from Meritor has been outlined to our class by the Ohio History Connection and Mayor Johns as undergoing the progress of becoming a UNESCO World Heritage site. Further, the current status of the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks is that, “three nominations in Ohio are among 20 currently on the ‘U.S. Tentative List’ from which nominees will be drawn to go forward for inscription in the coming years. Efforts are now well underway to prepare our Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks to go forward; while Serpent Mound and the Dayton Aviation Sites will follow afterwards” (worldheritageohio.org, 2019). With such confidence from the state of Ohio that the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks will become a World Heritage site, our class made the decision to designate land for a visitor center on every proposal for the Meritor property. Additionally, Hopewell EarthWorks themselves have voiced interest in the purchase of frontage property for such a center and parking. As a visitor center would provide several benefits for the city of Heath including revenue and the tourist experience.

With any newly designated UNESCO World Heritage site, the amount of tourism is expected to increase (Mallett, 2018). So, to begin my research I wanted to dig deeper into just how much of an increase is expected for tourism of this site in central Ohio. From this search I found a local Newark newspaper that highlighted many of these questions I was investigating. Dr. G. Jason Jolley, director at the George Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs at OU, served as an expert on the site for the report. He began by explaining what the status of World Heritage means and confirmed that without the World Heritage Status the Newark EarthWorks received 9,580 visitors in 2016 (Mallett, 2018). Jolley then confirmed the impact

that the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks would be expecting, “Tourism will double within three years of receiving the World Heritage designation, even if the community does nothing to attract visitors. Marketing the sites and developing tourism assets could double that projected increase” (Mallett, 2018). Building a visitor center would be a tourism asset that would help foster a greater and more sustained amount of tourism for the Heath and Newark community.

So, with such a great amount of tourism increases, a visitor center will be necessary to further visitation over the long term. The UNESCO guide to sustained tourism states that, “According to the World Tourism Council, infrastructure is the single most important key to tourism growth and performance” (UNESCO, 2019). Therefore, building an infrastructure such as a visitor center will be the first step in the right direction of preparing the Heath community for the tourism expected with the World Heritage status. Many World Heritage sites have followed a similar model by constructing a museum or visitors center to enhance the visitor experience. In order to understand the impact of a visitors center I have decided to compare and contrast current world heritage sites similar to Hopewell EarthWorks. The Ohio World Heritage website states that the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, “share certain characteristics with other monumental sites built substantially from earth, such as Poverty Point, Cahokia Mounds, Effigy Mounds National Monument, Amazonian geoglyphs, Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated sites” (worldheritageohio.org, 2019). So, I have decided to examine Stonehenge, Cahokia Mounds, and Poverty point under the scope of the visitor experience.

A Case Study: Stonehenge, Cahokia Mounds, and Poverty Point

In order to fully understand the importance of infrastructure for UNESCO World Heritage sites I have decided to look closer into three UNESCO sites: Stonehenge, Cahokia Mounds, and Poverty Point. While these sites have similar characteristics as sites built substantially from earth, they all offer different perspectives in regard to visitation methods. Stonehenge and Cahokia Mounds have shown much success in regard to tourism even on different continents. While Poverty Point continues to lack sustainable visitation. Therefore, these sites will reveal interesting factors to consider in my final graphic design for a visitor center.



Figure 1. Denton Corker Marshall Visitor Center built for the UNESCO World Heritage site Stonehenge.

Stonehenge located in Wiltshire was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986. The site is recognized for being the most architectural sophisticated prehistoric circle in the world (UNESCO, 2019). Further Stonehenge demonstrates, “Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial and mortuary practices resulting from around 2000 years of continuous use and monument building between circa 3700 and 1600 BC” (UNESCO, 2019). With Stonehenge

recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its significant cultural impact, initially only a small infrastructure was built for visitors. This temporary visitor center included only the necessities - a snack bar, bathroom, and small shop (Kennedy, 2013). While this center did the job, an official visitors center was implemented in December 2013 as seen in Figure 1. Designed by Denton Corker Marshall, this new and improved center is, “a determinedly meek and retiring grey glass, steel and timber structure 1.5 miles (2.4km) west of and invisible from the stones – and barely visible from a few hundred yards away” (Kennedy, 2013). This structure was designed to balance with Stonehenge and the vastness which surrounds it. Additionally, the center contains a cafe, ticket office, shop, car and bus park, and a museum exhibition of the site’s history. The addition of this new visitor center propelled tourism growth and performance. A record number of tourists visited Stonehenge the year following the center’s construction (BBC, 2014). More specifically, 1.3 billion people visited creating a 9% rise of visitation to the prehistoric site. By merely creating a visitor center, tourism increased significantly and the site itself is better equipped to handle such visitation.



Figure 2. The Cahokia Mounds Visitor Center located in Collinsville, IL.

While Stonehenge is successful on a large scale in Europe, the Cahokia Mounds present the success possible for a midwestern UNESCO site. The Cahokia Mounds site is located in Collinsville, IL and is the largest pre-Columbian settlement north of Mexico. The site, “is the pre-eminent example of a cultural, religious, and economic centre of the Mississippian culture (800–1350), which extended throughout the Mississippi Valley and the south-eastern United States” (UNESCO, 2019). Today, the Cahokia Mounds are operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and receive about 300,00 tourists annually (Cousins, 2019). The Cahokia Mounds also support tourism through their visitor center as shown in Figure 2. Similar to Stonehenge, the center offers a food service, staff offices, restrooms, gift shop, auditorium, parking, and a museum exhibition. However, the World Heritage status has made a substantial economic impact on Collinsville. “A 2014 study said Cahokia Mounds had an economic impact of about \$19.6 million and supported 179 jobs” (Cousins, 2019). This revenue and job support

are essential for Collinsville and can resemble the impact to be made in Licking County. Even when searching the internet for Collinsville, the results show several tourist attractions and rave reviews to not only visit the Cahokia Mounds but the town itself. Collinsville made the effort to support the tourism experience and the positive results are undeniable.

To contrast, Poverty Point has not taken strides to make the site a strong tourism attraction. Poverty Point is Louisiana's first and only World Heritage Site and is the only cultural World Heritage site located in the American Southeast (Greenlee, 2019). "It is a 402-acre archaeological park in northeast Louisiana that is regarded as the largest and most complex hunter-fisher-gatherer site in North America, if not the world. Dating from about 1,700 B.C.E. to 1,100 B.C.E., this designed landscape includes five earthen mounds (Mounds A, B, C, E and F) and six nested, C-shaped, earthen ridges surrounding a huge leveled, 43-acre plaza" (Greenlee, 2019). The prehistoric site includes a small visitor center similar to Stonehenge's original center which only includes the necessities. However, the site does not include any other infrastructure and has not been affected by substantial increased tourism. Further, "The state anticipated that visitation would increase slowly following inscription given the site's remoteness and its low name recognition" (Greenlee, 2019). So, while the site is remote in location, no steps have been taken to make the tourism experience more enjoyable. To reiterate, infrastructure is key to tourism growth and performance (UNESCO, 2019).

Implications:

With the comparison of Stonehenge, Cahokia Mounds, and Poverty point, it is clear to see the impact infrastructure can have on the tourism experience. To reiterate, Stonehenge's new

visitor center resulted in a record-breaking amount of visitation. The Cahokia Mounds have been successful not only with their visitor center but with supporting their own town infrastructure to enhance jobs and revenue through tourism of the site. While, Poverty Point continues to fall short on taking advantage of the opportunity to build infrastructure for tourism attraction. All in all, a visitor center is a necessary step to begin the process of preparing the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks for the visitation to come with the designation of a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Visitor Center Graphic Design:



Figure 3. This graphic represents the layout for the implementation of a Solar Manufacturing Facility created by Calvin P. and Mark R.

My Process:

In order to begin designing a potential visitor center, I wanted to understand the space and dimensions I was working with. So, I started by looking at Figure 3, a graphic of the Solar Manufacturing Facility layout which was created by my classmates. I chose to design based on

this graphic because the mixed-use space included the visitor center as a part of the bigger space. From this point, I began searching the internet for other UNESCO World Heritage visitor centers for inspiration and common themes. I then collected these images of visitor centers into a word document. Some of the visitor center images I gathered for my inspiration board were the Cahokia Mounds, Stonehenge, Mammoth Cave National Park, Smoky Mountain, Chaco Canyon, Chillicothe, and Olympic National Park. With several ideas for my visitor center in mind, I began working with the software Sketch Up. However, this software was unfamiliar to me, so I began by following the Sketch Up How-To videos and designed a playground before I felt comfortable designing. Once I felt ready, I designed the visitor center on Sketch Up which took about half a day to create.

My Design:



Figure 4. This image represents the front side of my 3D design for the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks.

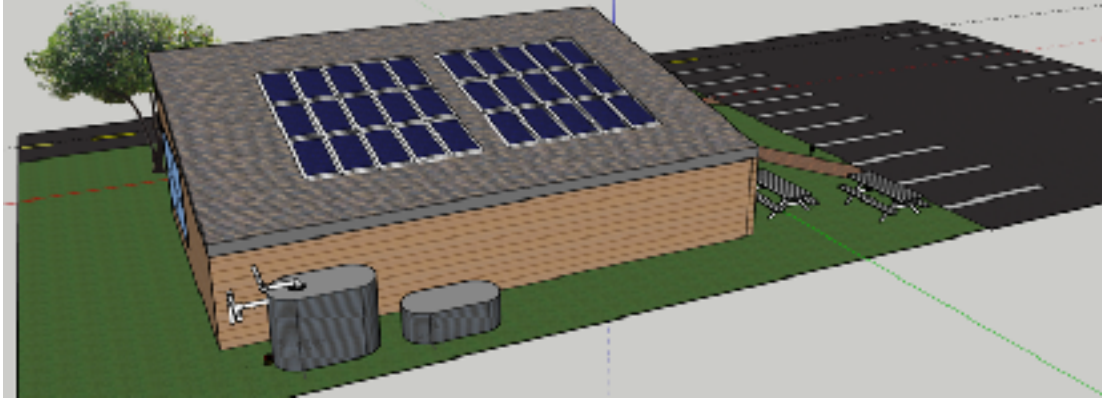


Figure 5. This image represents the back side of my 3D design for the Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks.

My overall thought for the visitor center was centered around capturing natural sunlight. This idea was based on a comment made during our final presentation from an Ohio History Connection Representative who noted how perfect solar energy was for the Meritor site to match the interest of the EarthWorks site with sunlight. Therefore, I want to incorporate large windows which tend to be eye catching under a lean roof. The idea of a lean roof is also optimal for solar energy production. So, my visitor center basic structure is a 30' by 50' rectangle with the frontage facing wall reaching 14' and the back wall reaching 8'. As you can see in Figure 4, I incorporated large windows with a glass door to capture maximum sunlight. From here, I added windows to the sides, outdoor lights, and letters stating, "Hopewell Ceremonial EarthWorks Visitor Center".

Rotating to the back side of the structure, as seen in Figure 5, I wanted to incorporate some environmental elements to the center. On the lean roof, I incorporated solar panels for collecting energy which has been a major interest for the site as a whole. As well as a water collection system for optimizing rainwater. These systems will positively benefit the Meritor site, and EarthWorks site both in a physical and informative way.

Lastly, referring to Figure 3, I wanted to add similar landscaping to the original graphic. Therefore, I added a brick walking path and concrete parking lot. For the final touches, I wanted to make the site feel more welcoming, so I added picnic tables, outdoor lighting along the path and a large tree. Overall, I understand that my graphic is not perfect; however, I hope it can convey or spark an idea of what the visitor center could look like. Further, I decided not to incorporate research about the interior of the center and the decision process of the pedestrian bridge to the EarthWorks site. As I spent the majority of my time understanding the implications of a visitor center as a whole and theorizing the exterior of the visitor center. Although I do want to make note that many visitor centers include museums as well. Overall, I believe that my current design includes many of the elements that will be considered for the final visitor center.

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