"A Vision for Our Harbor"

Aransas Pass, Texas 2007

Final Report

Landscape Architecture Design III
Texas A&M University
Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
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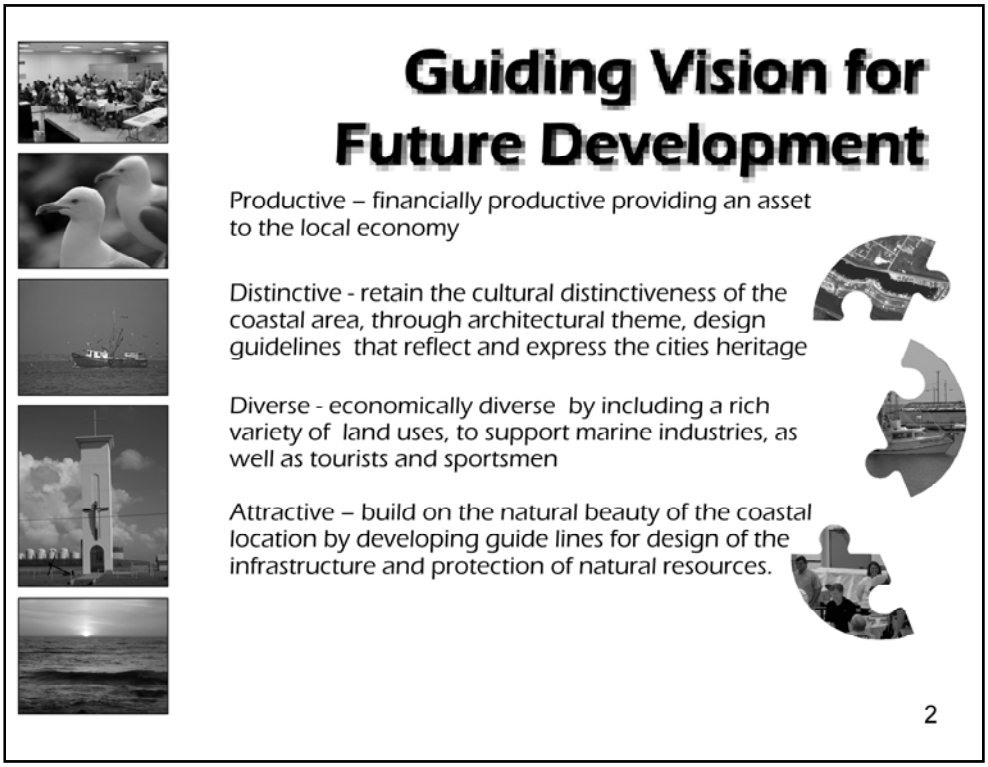
The City of Aransas Pass has embarked on a long-term program to redevelop and bring back to productivity the vacant and underutilized lands within the harbor. While there have been previous studies and proposals brought forward for the harbor the city has yet to officially adopt an official vision for the redevelopment of the harbor.

Critical to the success of any redevelopment plan will require building a consensus among the stake-holders and the community at large. In order to build the needed support for harbor redevelopment the Council worked with Students from Texas A&M University, College Station, in the 4th year Landscape Architecture Studio to develop a long range vision and explore development opportunities for the Conn Brown Harbor. This harbor and its environs are the cities most valuable physical asset and the root of the communities history and culture. Because there have been economic changes in the commercial fishing and shrimping industry over the past two decades the harbor has fallen into disrepair and many of the businesses that once filled the harbor are no longer there. However, there is still a core commercial fishing and shrimping industry based in the harbor.

This presentation is a summary of that effort.

First, let's review the Vision that was developed by the students to guide the semesters work.



This vision statement was developed by the students early in the process to guide the work that would follow. While this statement has not been adopted by the city. Agencies, Cities and other political jurisdictions often find it useful to develop vision statements such as this to serve as a means of measuring whether or not development proposals and activities are in concert with the long-term vision.

The design and planning process should not be perceived as static rather, a search to identify the pieces of the long-term puzzle and while meeting the current needs of the community. Therefore it must be a continuing process that generally includes:

Opening and Maintaining dialogue with the community and stakeholders by:

- Identifying the needs and preferences of the community
- Openly exploring development alternatives
- Recognizing change in environmental context and influences (political, financial, social as well as natural environmental)

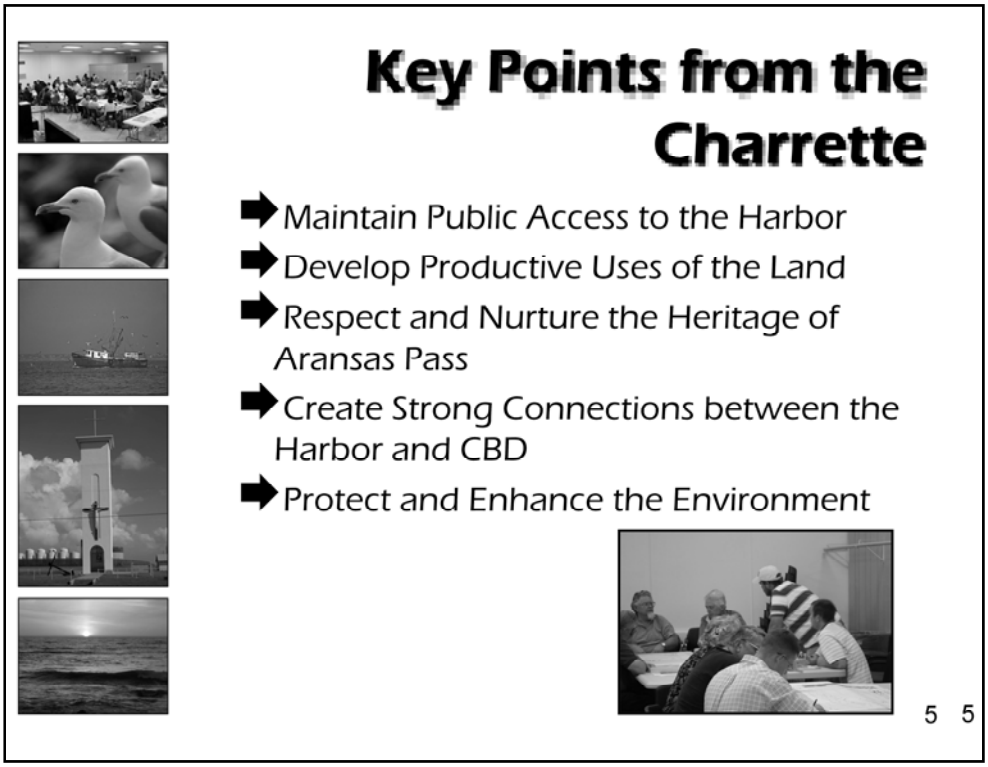
Prepare and adopt Long-range plans which should include:

- A stated vision for the community at large
- Adopted plans of action with clearly stated, measureable Goals and Objectives
- Craft and adopt strategies for achieving the vision and goals
- Prepare and adopt a Land Use/Zoning plan that clearly reflects the vision
- Craft and adopt policies, guidelines and other tools to ensure success

Since presenting initial concept for exploring options for the Harbor and environs to Council the following steps have been completed.

Dialogue was successfully opened between the community, stakeholders and the city administration

- An initial assessment of the regional environmental and cultural context was accomplished
- Preferences for land use types appropriate to redevelopment of Conn Brown Harbor have been identified
- Development alternatives have been developed that explore the four land use types that were most cited.
- Studies of land use pattern and distribution were completed



Nine key public concerns were found in the Charrette

Maintain Public Access to the Harbor

There is nearly universal agreement that whatever development occurs in the harbor area, it must be done in a way that will provide public access to the waters edge and that a significant area of public use facilities (i.e. Harbor Park, City Dock) will be maintained and expanded.

Develop Productive Uses of the Land

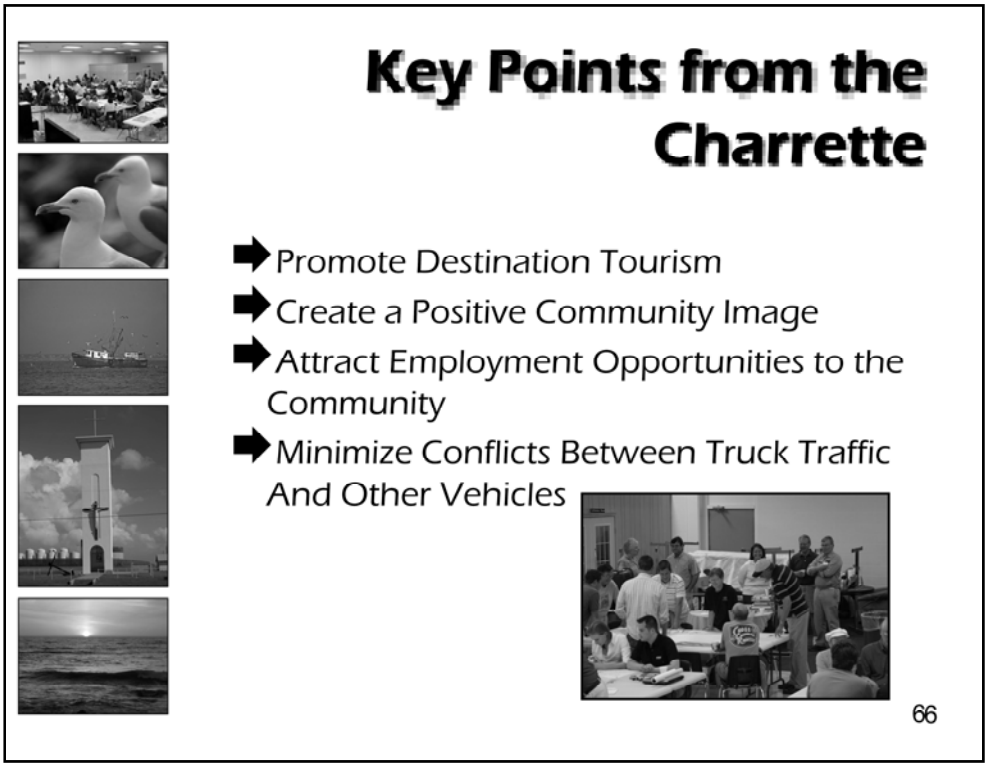
There is general agreement that the land uses allowed in the harbor should be productive and contribute to the betterment of the overall community. Uses should provide employment opportunities for residents, and the production of tax revenues should benefit the greater community and not absentee ownership.

Respect and Nurture the Heritage of Aransas Pass

There is considerable agreement that the historic relationship of the city to the commercial fishing and shrimping industry should be maintained and celebrated.

Protect and Enhance the Environment

There is a broad appreciation of the need to nurture the natural resource base of the community. Any new development must be done in a way that it contributes to long-term sustainability of this environmental base.



Promote Destination Tourism

Participants recognized the potential to attract tourists to the area given the unique natural resource base of the city. While the city does not have beachfront resources, the harbor is one of the closest protected deep water anchorages to the Pass (Aransas Pass) and to the rich fishery of Red Fish Bay and the lower Gulf of Mexico. It also has one of the most diverse bird populations in the nation that annually draws birders as well as hunters to the **area.**

Attract Employment Opportunities to the Community

Considerable focus should be placed on the need to upgrade the employment opportunities in the region by attracting service industries and **businesses that will provide better wages for residents.**

Create a Positive Community Image

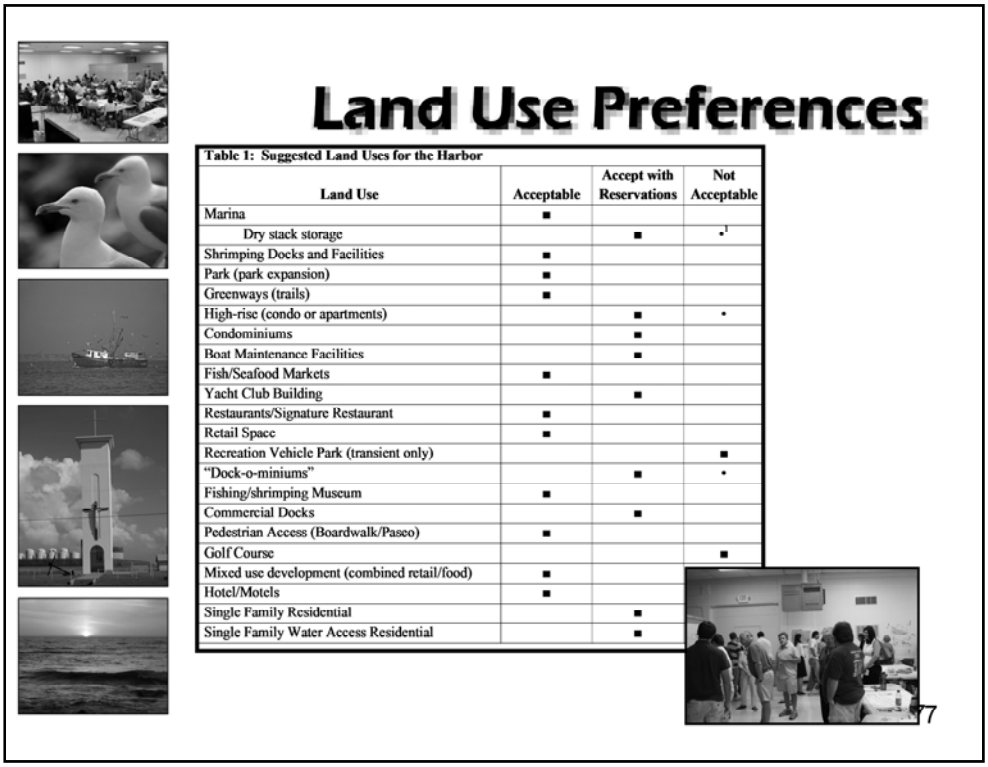
Every effort should be made to create a welcoming atmosphere in the harbor and work to generate better connections to the rest of the business community. The city should adopt guidelines for development such as sign ordinances, tree protection programs, lighting requirements, and similar guidelines that will lead to a positive community image.

Separate Traffic Types

As the harbor develops, separation of commercial and industrial traffic from other types of traffic, such as passenger cars, boaters, visitors, etc., should be encouraged. The city should also consider developing a system of "green ways" to accommodate pedestrians and non-motorized transport forms.

Create Strong Connections between the Harbor and the Central Business District (CBD)

Overall development in the harbor district should strengthen the physical and visual connection between the harbor and the historic CBD. This may include such actions as connecting Huff street to Goodnight Avenue, improving the intersection of Stapp Ave and



The Charrette also yielded a list of acceptable land use for harbor redevelopment. These uses generally corresponded with land use studies accomplished by the students early in the process.

Review Land Uses

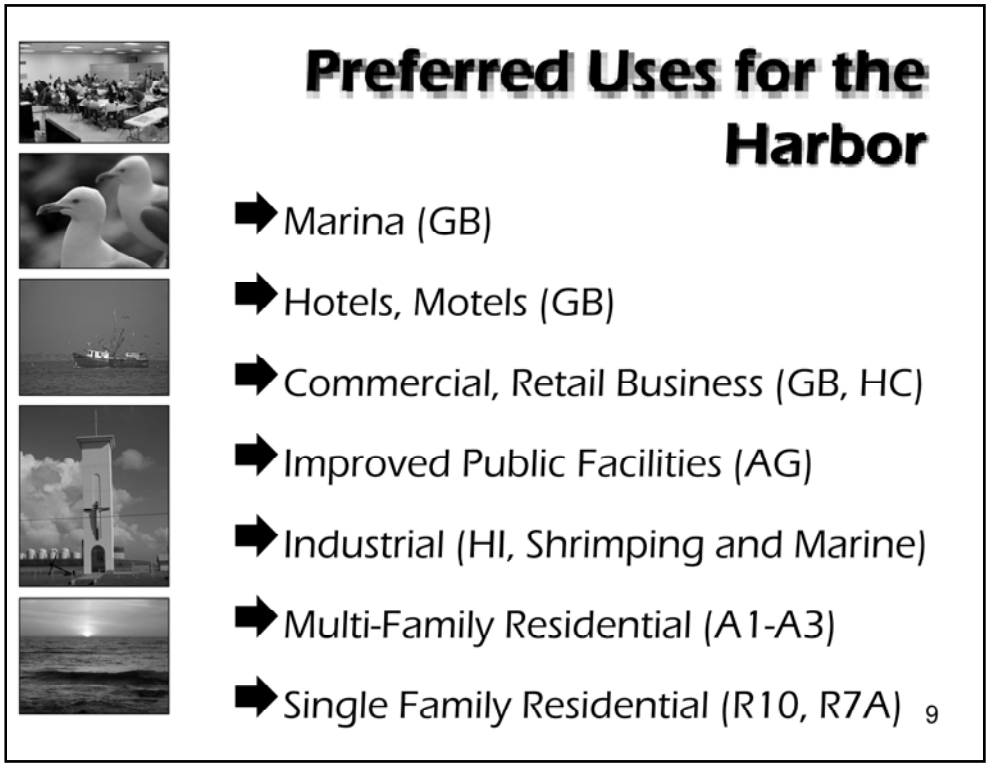
Prior to the Charrette the students had been asked to evaluate the existing land use patterns of the community and develop some preliminary studies of land use mix for the harbor and its environs. The area in question is bounded on the west by Commercial Street, on the North by Stapp Ave, On the East by the GIWW and by Goodnight Ave to the South.

We have not shown many of these because several of them were impractical for economic or other reasons.

However, some of the more practical ones have been summarized here. These do have significance since students were asked to locate their design proposals in relation to their overall land use scheme.

I would like to start with these before characterizing the more detailed development studies.

Everyone should remember that these are not development proposals they are simply studies to show a few development alternatives.



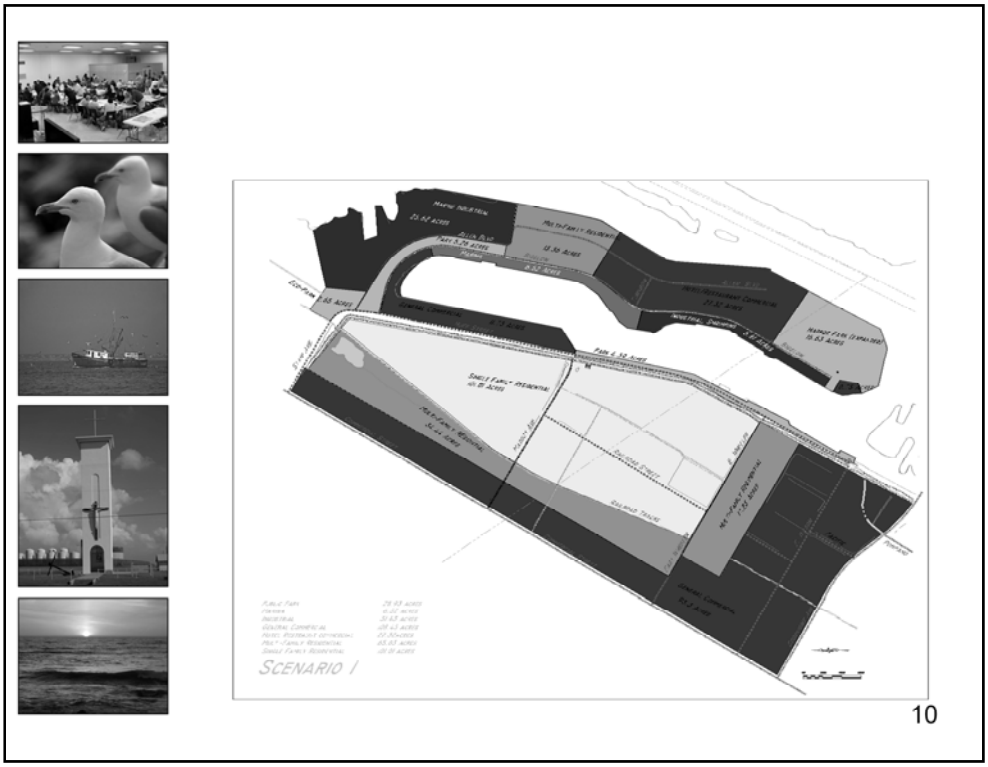
Note that these seven land use types do not exactly reflect those in the table. That is because many of these categories combine other land uses cited such as:

Signature Restaurants would be part of the commercial development

Board walk or pedestrian promenade, greenways, should be integrated with all land uses to encourage pedestrian and non-motorized transport within the harbor environs and ensure public access to all areas. Commercial docks for charter fleet, guides, party boats, eco-tours and even the yacht club strong compliments to the marina facilities.

Other uses such as multi-family residential (condominiums), a shrimping heritage museum, and improved shrimping facilities are all uses that would also be appropriate on the peninsula. In one of the seven categories.

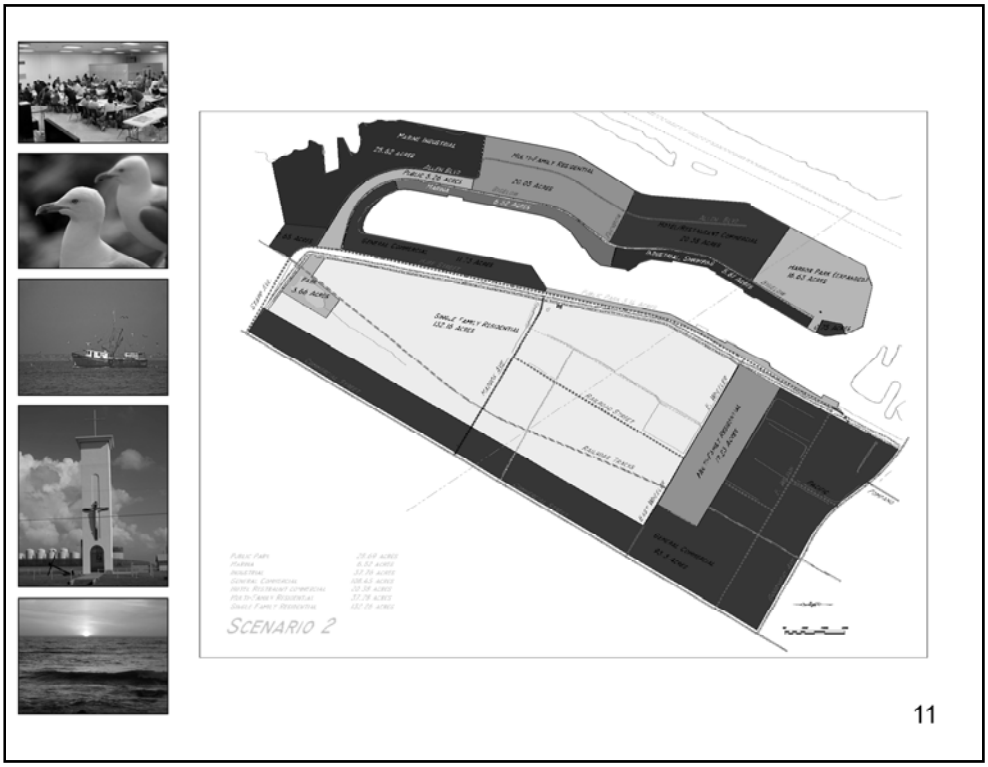
You will note that the current zoning classifications are shown for each land use type. At this time all of Conn Brown Harbor is zoned HI (Heavy Industrial) and the vacant lands west of the seawall are zoned AG agricultural.



This solution utilizes Multi-family (apartment and condominium uses) as a buffer between commercial properties to the south and west. The Seawall forms the buffer to the north and east. This solution envisions a boulevard link extending Huff St from its terminus at E. Wilson to the Pompano St intersection with Goodnight Ave. The Huff Street Extension would rise over the seawall and Huff would become a public greenway from Goodnight to Maddox.

The east side of Huff between Maddox and Stapp Avenues would be devoted to mixed commercial use, specialty shops restaurants and entertainment venues. Along Bigelow the bluff area would remain green space and a marina is located along the western shore line of the harbor from the bend to Turnbough St. The Eastern shore of the harbor is devoted to industrial uses to the north end followed by multi-family residential, commercial properties specifically for hotel/motel and restaurant use. The Harbor park has been expanded in area from 12 to approximately 29 acres. On the western shore a commercial site has been preserved in the park area separated from the consolidated shrimping docks by a green space which is to be developed in conjunction with the seaman's monument.

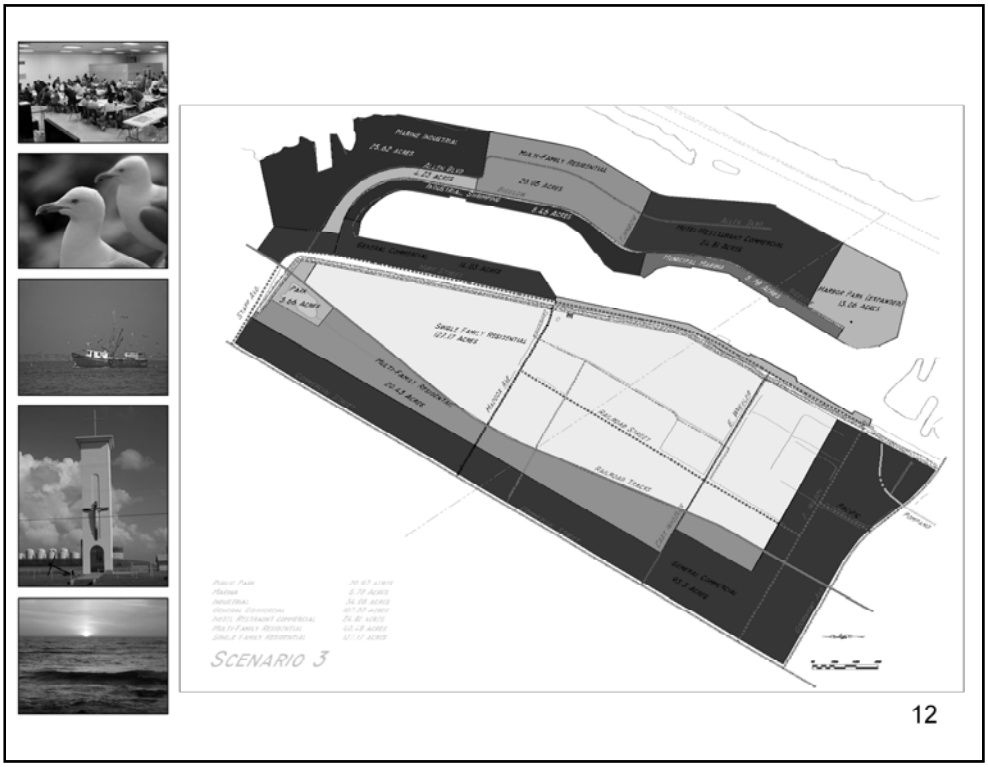
Also notice the public park land at the north end of Huff St. This would be for an eco-park development in conjunction with the wetlands to the north and west of the site. This was a very popular notion with the Charrette.



The harbor portion of this scenario is almost the same as the first scenario. The multi-family residential has been expanded somewhat and the hotel/motel restaurant area has been reduced somewhat. The eco-park is not included in this scenario.

Top the West of the seawall a majority of the land has been utilized for single family residential with only a small area of multi-family residential along E. Wheeler Ave. The area around the drainage lake just south of the seawall off Stapp Ave. has been suggested as a public park.

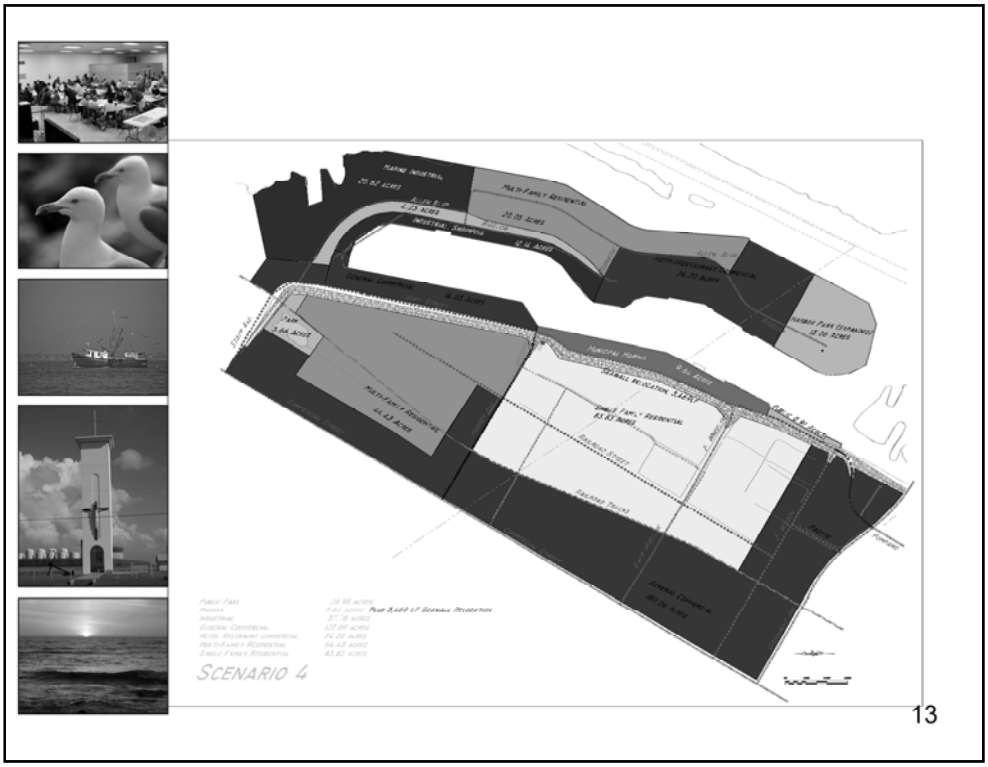
The marina remains at the rear of the harbor on the western shore and the improved shrimping docks remain on the western shore to the south of the marina.



This scenario reduces the commercial property and increases the amount of single family residential use west of the seawall. To the south there is no buffer land use between the commercial properties along E. Wilson Ave. To the west the single family properties would be buffered by a band of multi-family residential properties. The Park around the drainage lake is also included.

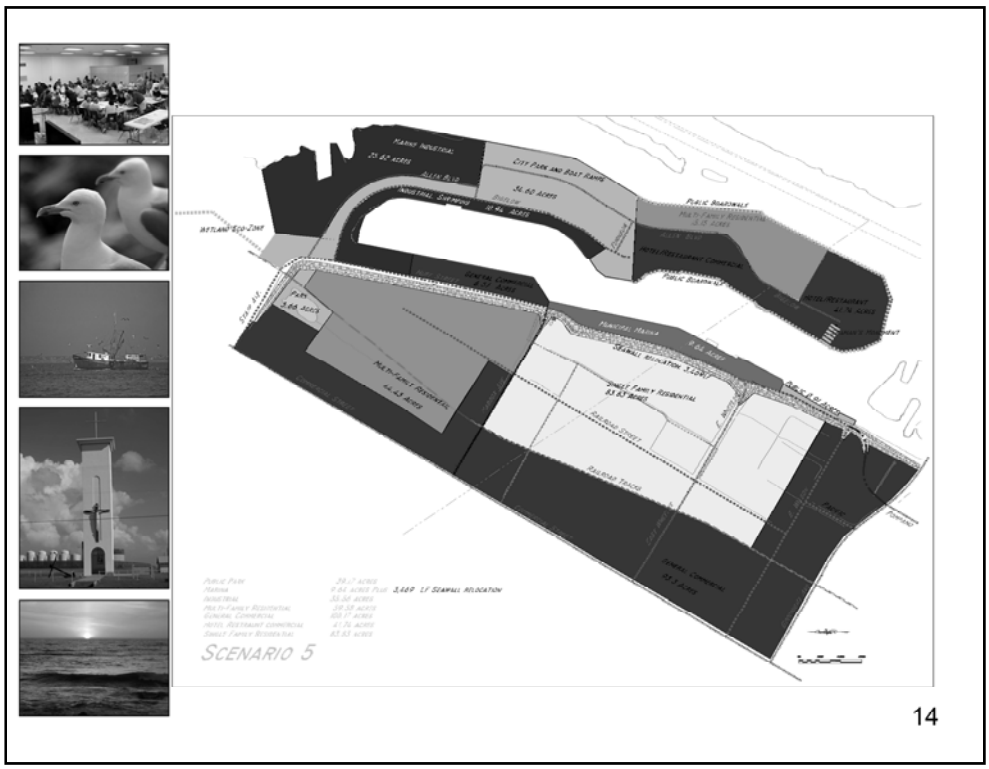
The connection of Huff to Goodnight is a common element in all the proposals. This one also designates the southern section of Huff St as a public greenway to the intersection of Maddox St. All of the land to the east of Huff St is designated general commercial for specialty shops, restaurants and entertainment venues. The Shrimping docks have been consolidated to the north end of the harbor and the marina is located to the south along the western shore of the peninsula.

Harbor park is expanded from 12 to 20 acres and includes the area for development of the seaman's monument. Along the eastern shore adjacent to the intra-coastal the land is used for Hotel/motel, restaurant north of the park followed by multi-family residential and the industrial area north of the bend in Allen Blvd.



This scenario expands the amount of commercial land use particularly along Commercial street it extends to the current railroad tracks and along Maddox Ave and to include the old freeze plant site. The area north of Maddox is designated for Multifamily use with a public park around the drainage lake. The area between E. Wilson and Maddox are designated for single-family use.

•The link of Huff to Goodnight is present but this solution envisions that the seawall has been relocated some 160 ft to the West between E. Wilson and Maddox. This provides for locating the a marina on the eastern shore of along Huff St in association with commercial development to the North. On the harbor peninsula the shrimping docks have been consolidated to the north end. The central section of the peninsula is given over to multi-family residential use and hotel/motel, restaurant use. The harbor park is expanded from 12 to 20 acres

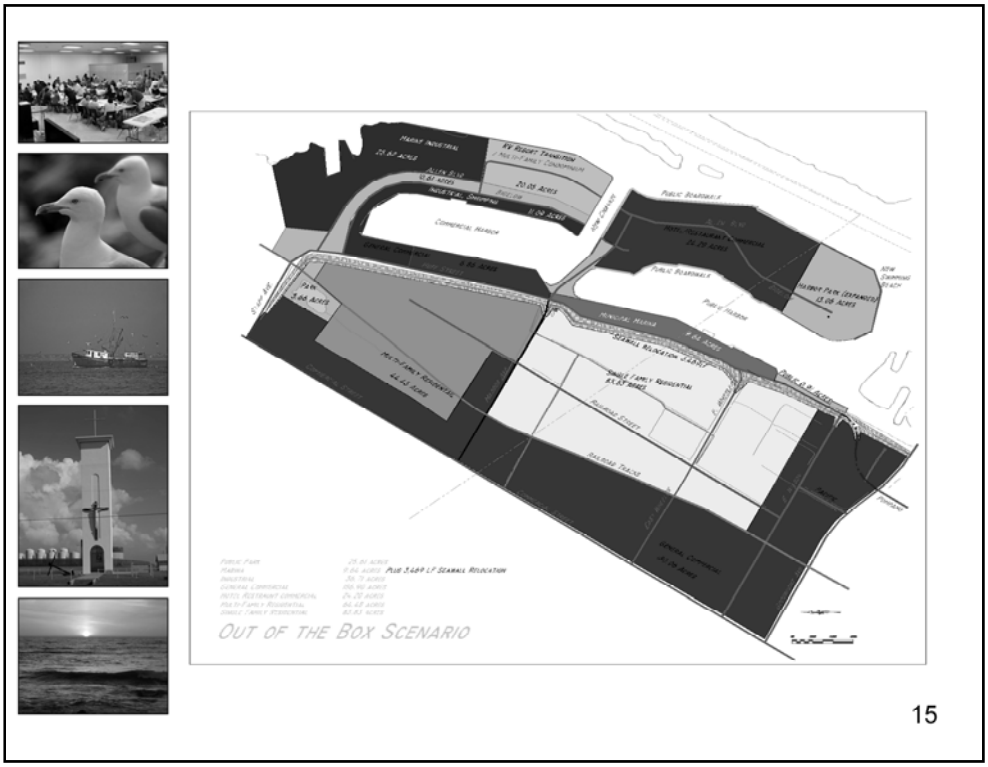


This scenario maintains the same land use pattern west of the seawall as well as the extension of Huff St and relocation of the seawall between E. Wilson and Maddox. The marina remains on the east-facing shore of the harbor in the area created by moving the seawall. To the north of the marina the commercial area has been reduced in size to accommodate more area for the improved shrimping docks.

ON the peninsula of the harbor the harbor park has been removed from the end of in favor of more area for commercial, hotel and restaurant properties which would have much higher market value in this location.

The harbor park was moved toward the north central part of the peninsula and expanded to just over 39 acres. Boat launch facilities would still be located in the harbor and the area of the increased area of the park would accommodate festival setup and overflow parking for special events, festivals and the like. This solution also allows connection of the bluff area to the north end of the park for the potential development of an eco-park center as proposed earlier.

The area around the seaman's monument would be developed providing an unobstructed connection between the monument and the waters edge. On all the commercial and multi-family properties it would be required that a 15ft. Developed pedestrian promenade be provided that would allow public access along the entire shoreline of the harbor. In addition public assess points would be required from Allen and Bigelow to the pedestrian at regular intervals.



This last scenario is rather a compilation of some of the out of the box ideas the students had. There were several solutions that created land bridges to the harbor dividing it into to two separate parts. In most cases the reason for doing this was to create greater separation between commercial/public uses and industrial uses. One of the key issues in most of these solution was a desire to create greater visual access to the harbor itself from Goodnight/361. Many of the solution actually moved the seawall back to the Atlantic Street right-of -way or suggested acquisition of the private lands between the harbor entrance and 361.

	Land Acreage Acres						
Scenario Number	Park	Marina	Industrial	General Commercial	Hotel Restaurant	Multi-Family Residential	Single Family Residential
1	**28.93**	**6.52**	**31.43**	**108.45**	**27.32**	**65.03**	**101.01**
2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
3	**20.97**	**5.78**	**34.08**	**107.33**	**24.81**	**40.48**	**133.24**
4	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
5	**39.17**	**9.64**	**35.56**	**90.27**	**41.74**	**64.48**	**83.83**
6	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total Acres							**369.69**

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This table summarizes the land use distributions in each of the scenarios. The ones in red show the greatest variety in the land use mix.

Based on the findings of the Charrette the students were asked to do two detailed design studies of the most preferred land uses cited for the harbor. These plans show how development might be fitted to the harbor lands. The students were allowed to select from four different project types. There were more than 60 different projects so it is not possible to discuss each one. However, the work is available in digital form for anyone interested in seeing all the solutions.

These four projects types were explored based on the most frequently cited uses from the Charrette.
•A marina
•Hotels
•Commercial/Retail
•Improved public park

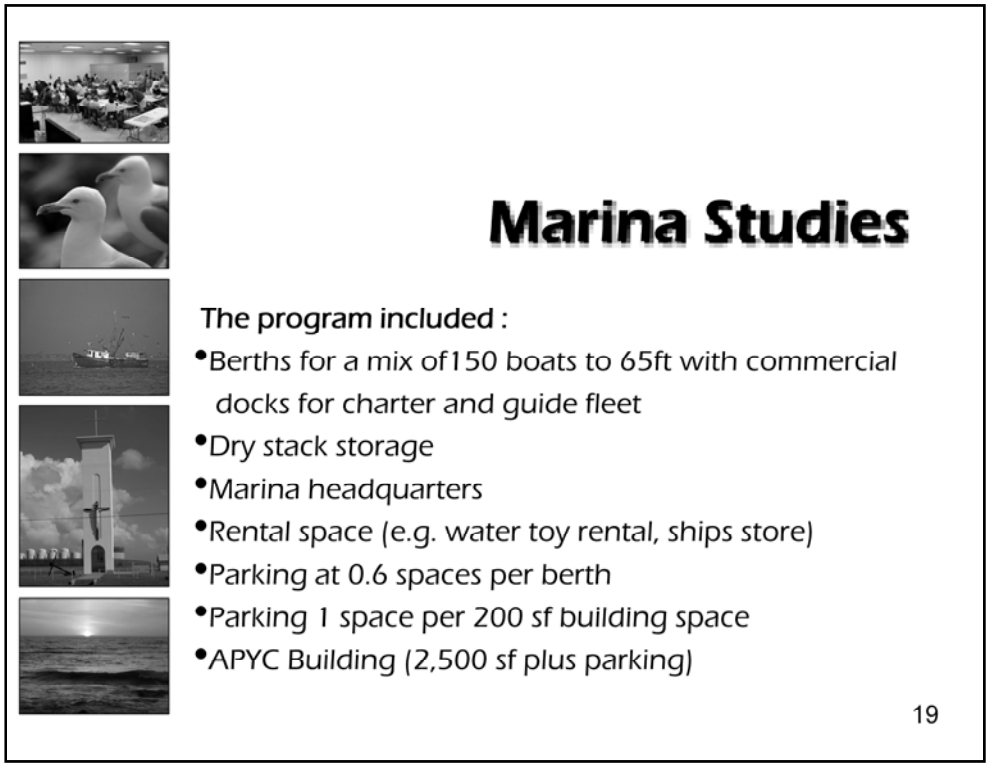
Note that many of these combine other land uses cited such as:

•Signature Restaurants would be part of the commercial development
•Board walk or pedestrian promenade, greenways, should be integrated with all land uses to encourage pedestrian and non-motorized transport within the harbor environs and ensure public access to all areas.
•Commercial docks for charter fleet, guides, party boats, eco-tours and even the yacht club strong compliments to the marina facilities.

Other uses such as multi-family residential (condominiums), a shrimping heritage museum, and improved shrimping facilities are all uses that would be appropriate on the peninsula.

A study of improvements for the shrimping industry because this is a very specialized use and there was not sufficient time to develop the information needed to do a credible solution.

We will introduce each project and its elements as we review the representative examples.



A marina is clearly is considered by the city as a major catalyst for future development The project solutions that were developed were based on a long-range program for development and using authoritative standards of marina design.

The design program given the students included the following elements

The marina had to have berths for 150 boats with a mix of sizes from the 25-30ft to 65ft berths were to be distributed evenly between motor vessels and sailing vessels. Plus 5 transient berths.

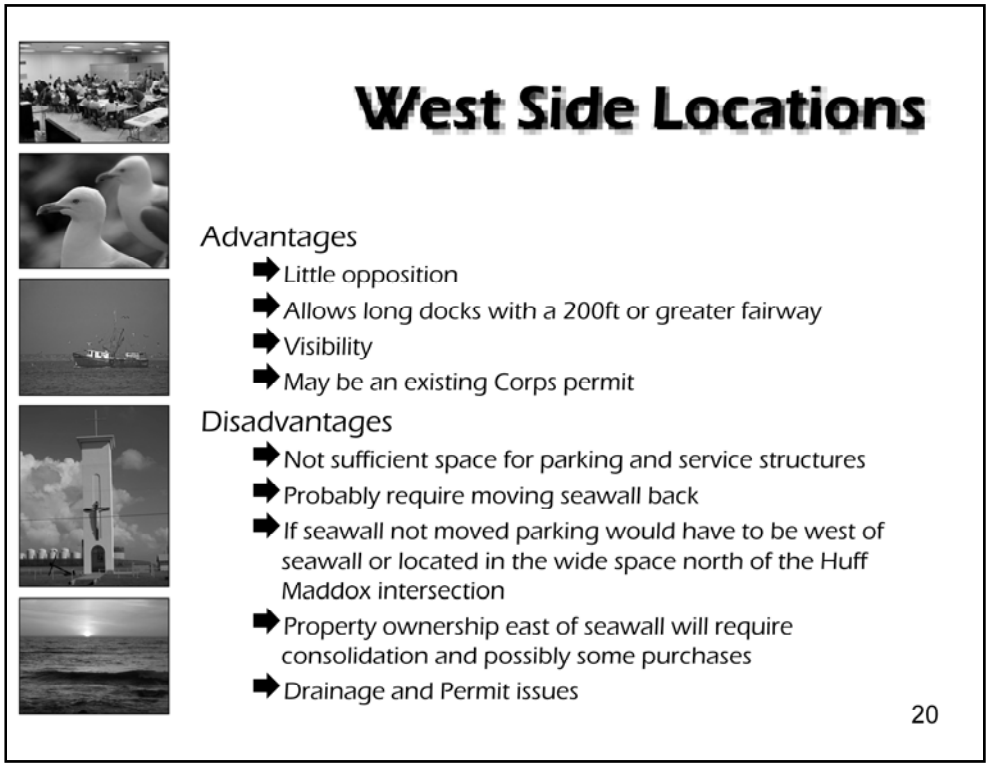
Commercial docks for 20 to 30 vessels were to be provided to house a charter, guide and tour boat fleet.

Dry stack storage was to be provided for at least 100 boats

A marina headquarters building was to be provided of about 4,000 sf to include the harbor masters office, restrooms, and other lease space for guides, rental of water toys, retail space, storage, etc.

Parking had to be provided for the marina at 0.6 spaces per berth (90 minimum within 300ft of berth served)
Parking of 1 space per 200 sf of rental space

A site for a Yacht Club building and dock within the marina area.



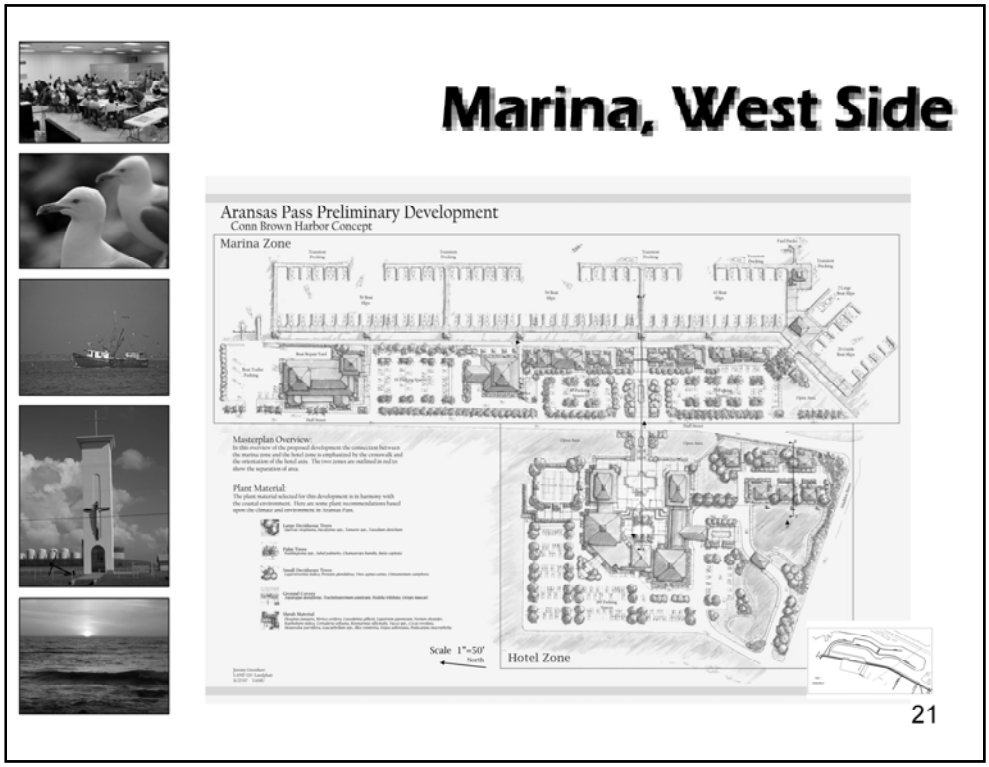
There were solutions that located the marina on both the east and west side of the harbor. The west being the side along Huff Street and the seawall nd the east being the harbor peninsula side.

The west side location had the following advantages and disadvantages:

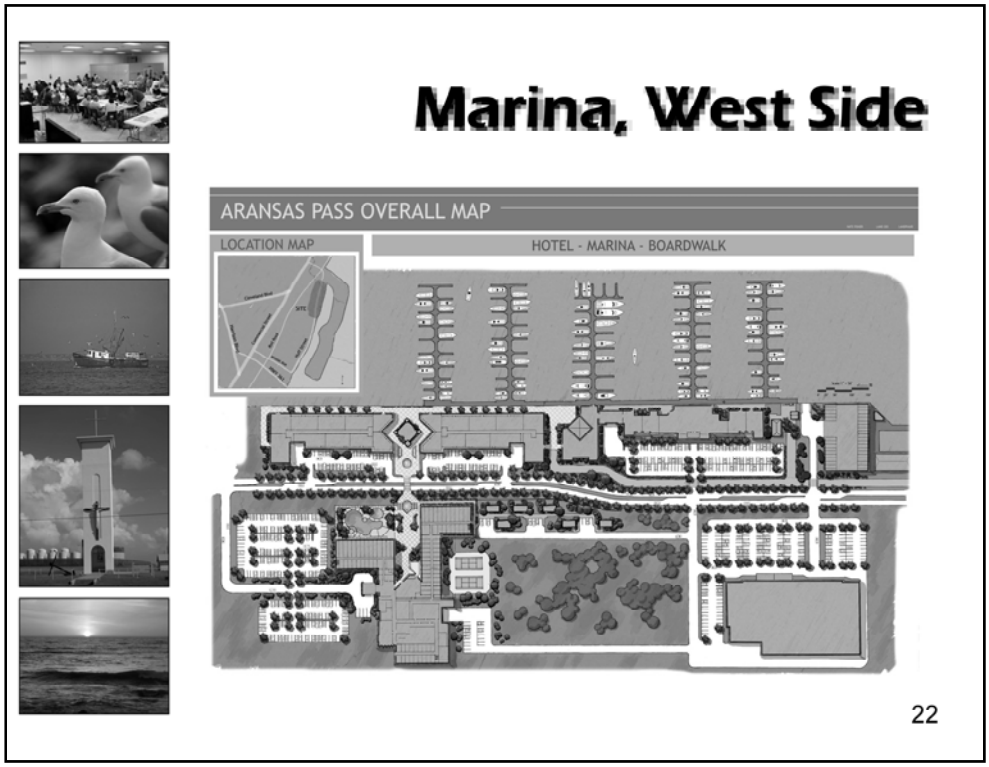
- There was little opposition to the west side location and in fact many seemed to view it as decided
- The west side allows for berth space of over 300 vessels depending on the mix while maintaining a fairway of over 200ft
- Good visibility from Huff St. as well as Wilson, Wheeler and Maddox intersections.

The West side has the following disadvantages

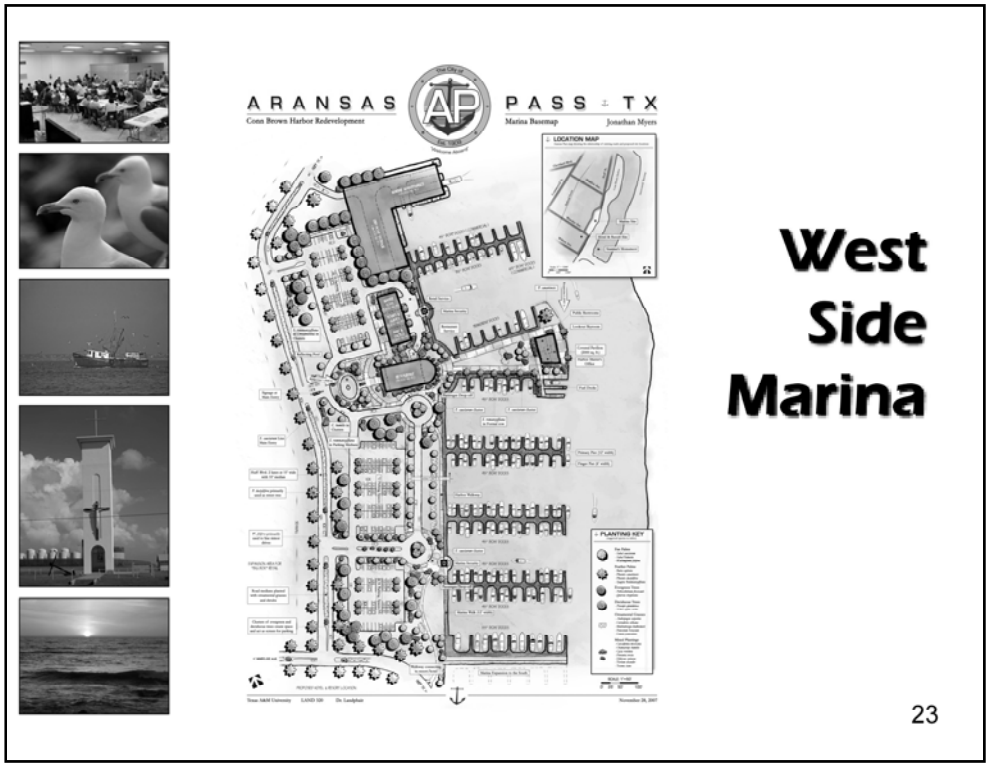
- There is not sufficient space to provide the recommended parking and service structures along Huff street, south of Maddox.
- Using this side will likely require moving the seawall back 120 to 200ft.
- If the seawall is not moved parking would have to be west of the seawall of consolidated in the lands to the north of Maddox. While possible it would result in walking distances greater than 300 ft to berth areas.
- Property ownership west of the seawall will require some acquisition and consolidation in order to move seawall.
- Moving the seawall will likely require permits and additional engineering studies to ensure proper drainage and it could require rebuilding or replacing current pump stations and storm lines.



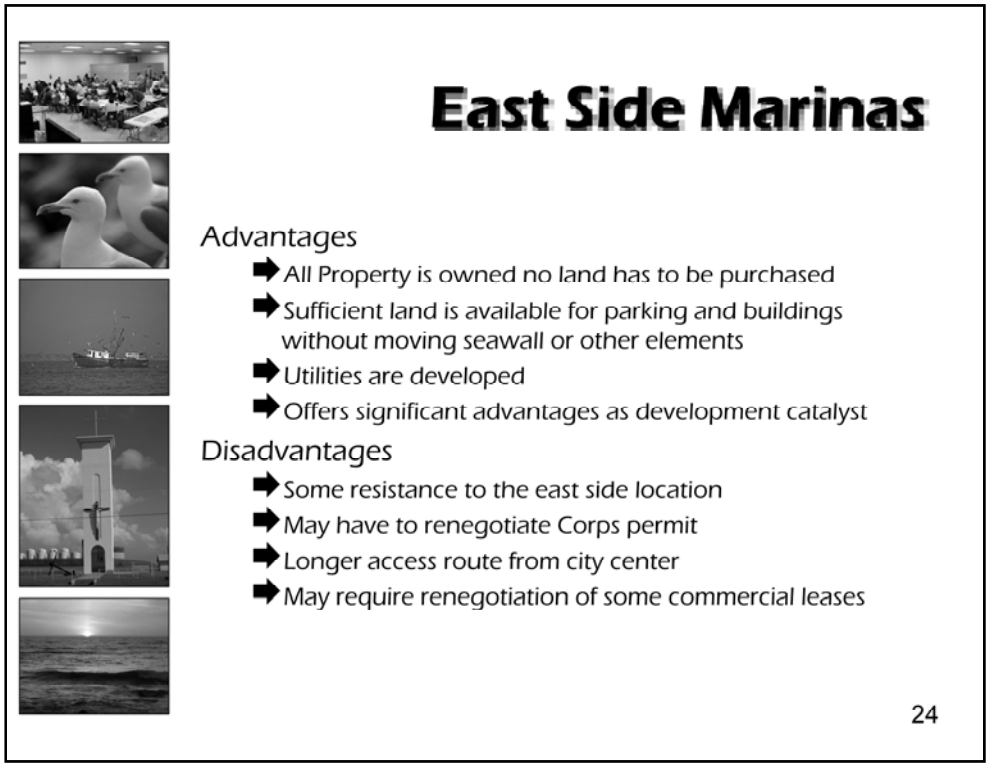
This solution shows the marina and hotel located in the wide area north of Maddox street with the hotel at the elevation of the seawall, to the west of Huff St. It actually does not meet the full parking requirements per berth as well s the 1 per 200 sf requirement for rental space. The dry stack storage is the large building to the left which really complicates the parking situation. None the less this is an interesting location and one that may have merit in conjunction with the added commercial development.



This solution also locates the marina and a hotel at the north end. This solution has far more rental space than can be supported by the parking. This was a serious flaw in the solution that keeps it from working at all.



This solution is on the west side and requires the relocation of a portion of the seawall. The solution meets most of the requirements but does not show the parking for the dry stack facility to the north. Huff street is terminated at E. Wheeler and the access road moved to the Atlantic Ave. Right-of-way between Wheeler and Maddox.

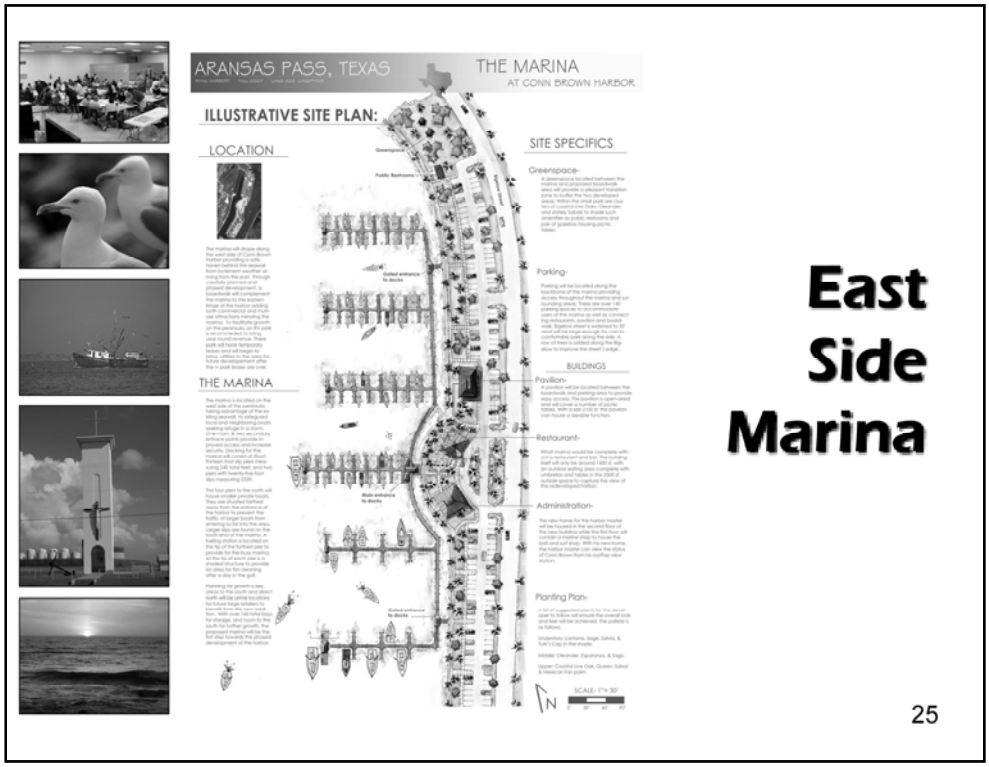


East Side Marina Locations have the following Advantages

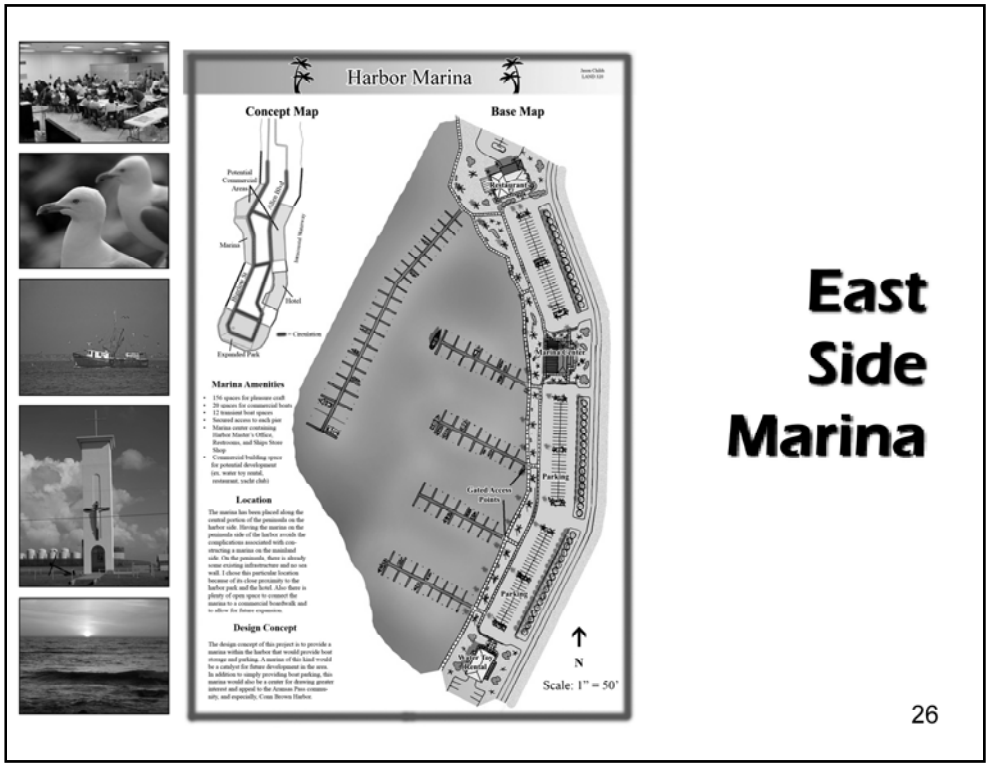
- All property is owned by the city
- Sufficient land is available for parking and buildings with no substantial expenditure on changes in infrastructure
- Utilities are developed
- Would be a catalyst to large areas of currently under utilized land for associated development

Disadvantages

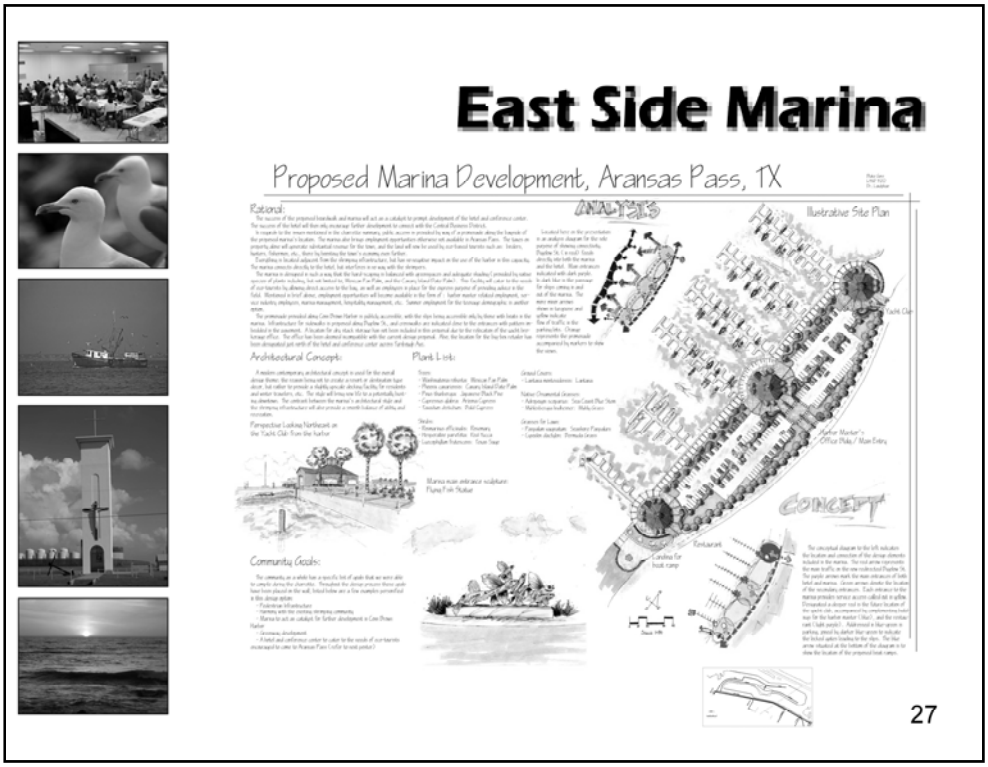
- There has been some resistance to east side development
- May need to revise or re-negotiate Corp Permit
- Longer access from City Center
- May have to re-negotiate current leases



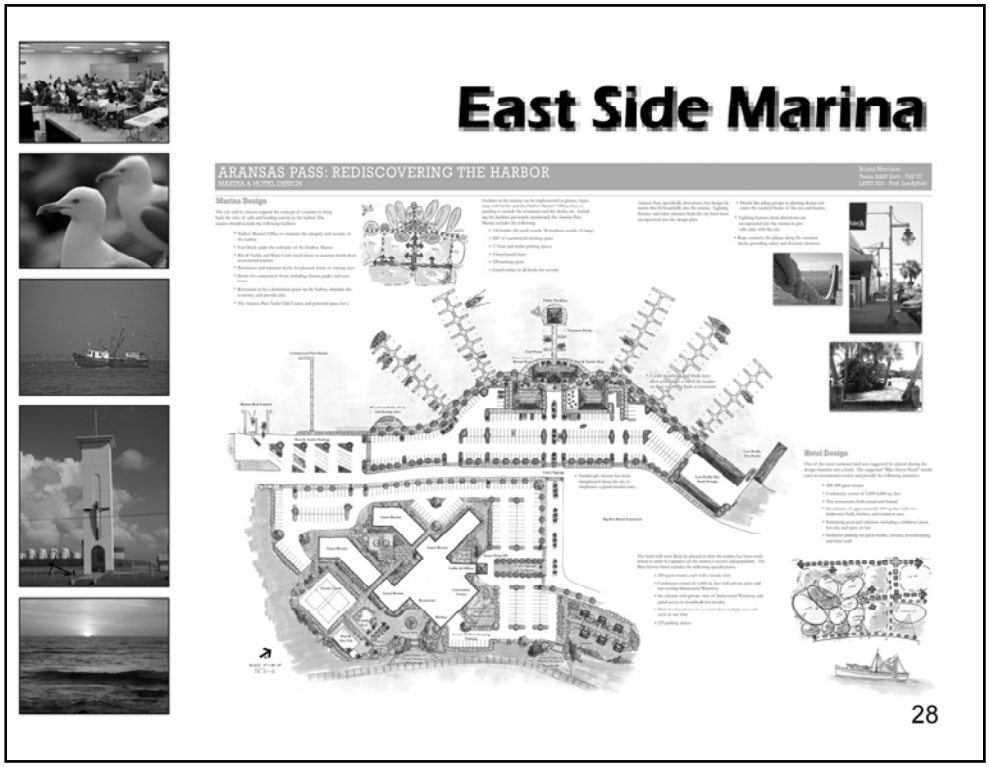
This location is at the north end of the harbor just past the bend in Bigelow st. It does not have the dry stack storage requirement met but links nicely with proposed commercial development proposed on the West side.



This solution locates the marina just south of the bulge. It does not provide for drystack storage on this site and has poor distribution of berths.



This solution locates the marina at the bulge on the east side. The central location allows for consolidation of the shrimping industry docks in the north part of the harbor and more commercial development along the shoreline to the south.

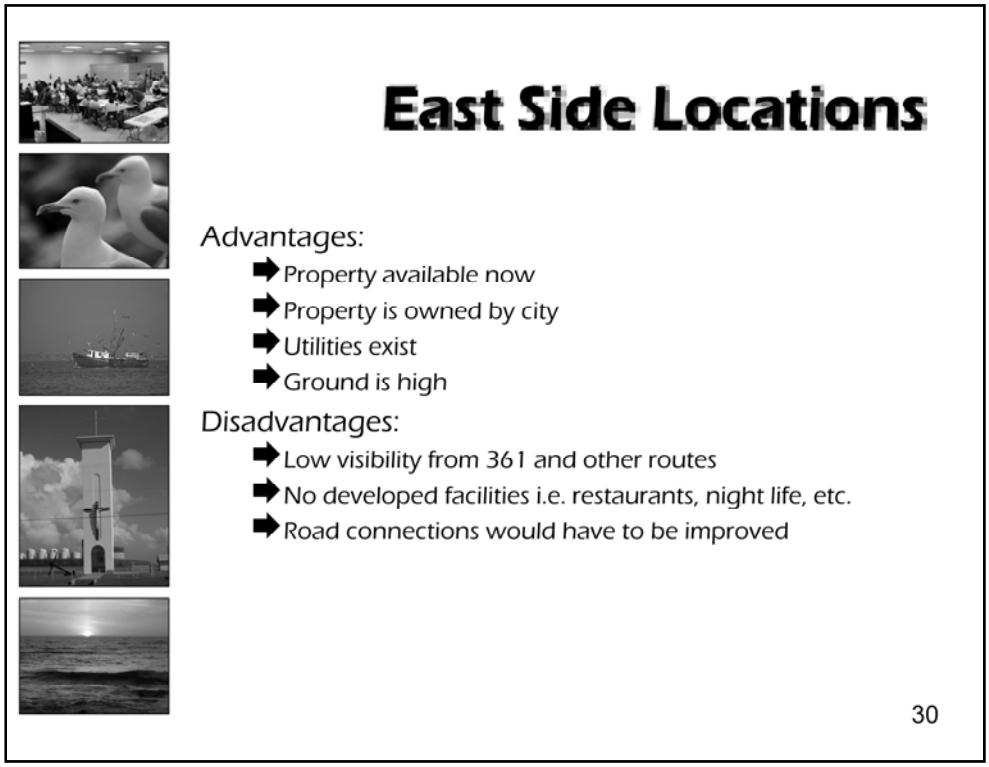


This solution also uses the bulge area and shows the development of a hotel to the east of Bigelow.

The concept of this project was a hotel retreat or conference center aimed at fishing, hunting, and eco-tourism. Support and attracting such a facility will require marketing of the cities location to those individuals not seeking direct beach access. Likewise, possible rebuilding the swimming beach in conjunction with park improvements could make a hotel more attractive if located near the park.

The program the students were given included

- A 200 room hotel with modest conference meeting facilities
- 2 restaurants
- 2 bars
- Theme pool area
- Outdoor gardens
- Waterfront cabanas (5)
- Parking (1/unit, 2/cabana, 15 staff)

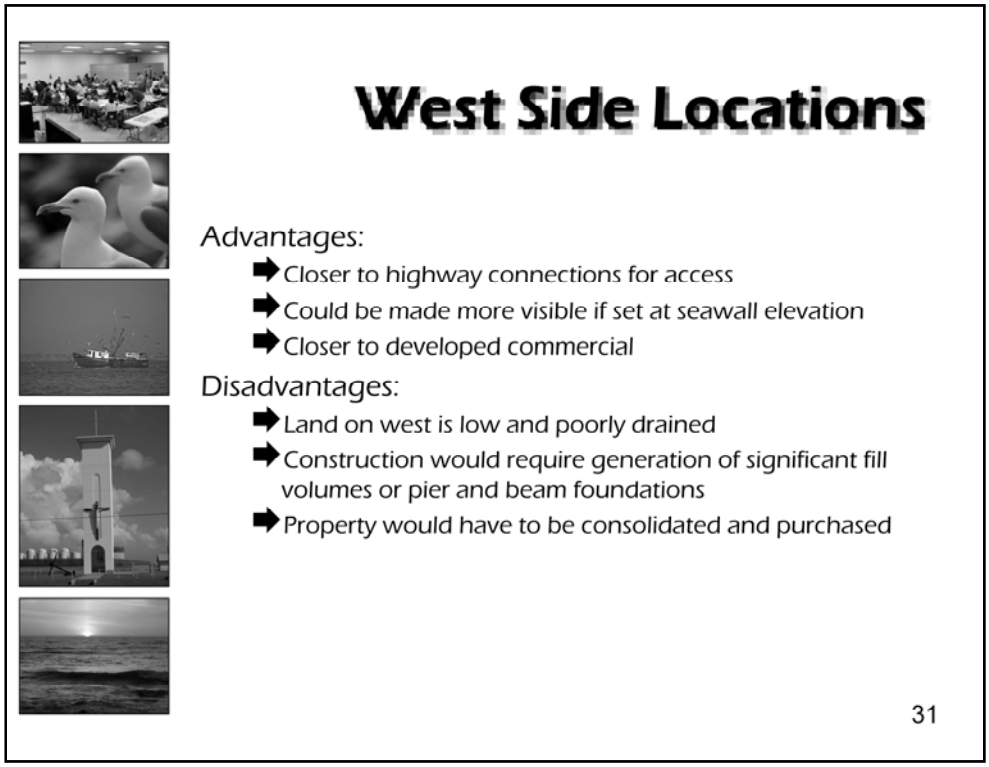


Advantages:

- Property available now
- Property is owned by city
- Utilities exist
- Ground is high

Disadvantages:

- Low visibility from 361 and other routes
- No developed facilities i.e. restaurants, night life, etc.
- Road connections would have to be improved

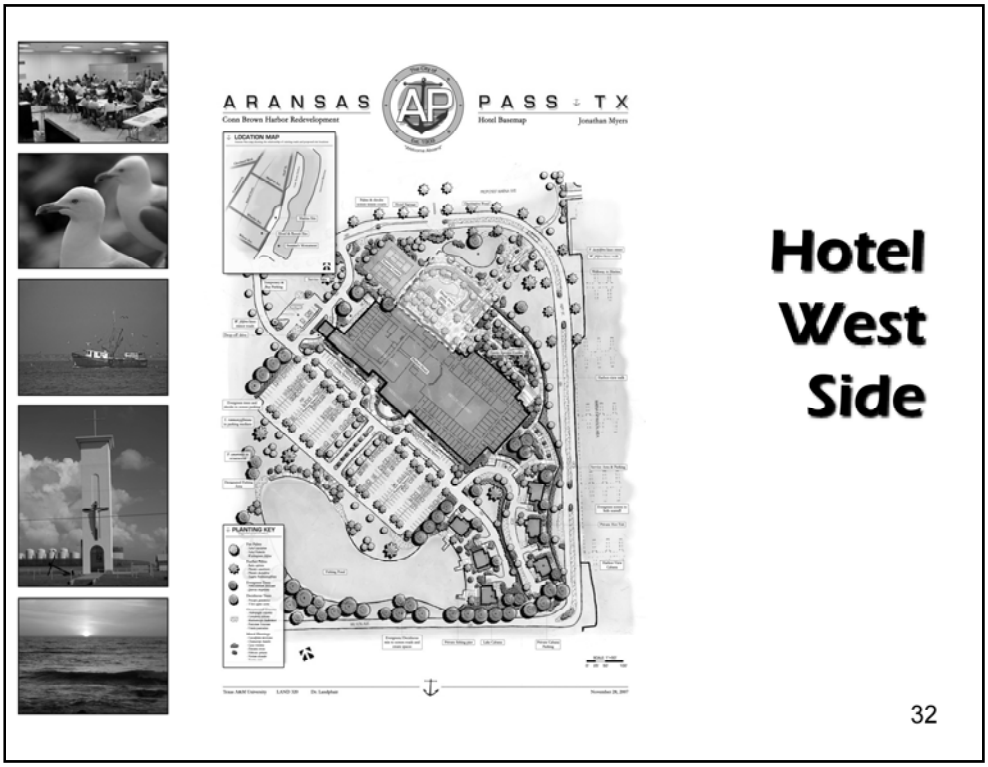


Advantages:

- Closer to highway connections for access
- Could be made more visible if set at seawall elevation
- Closer to developed commercial

Disadvantages:

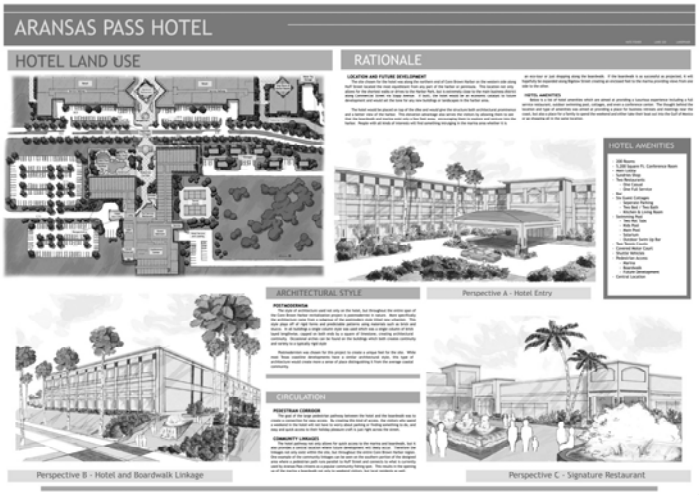
- Land on west is low and poorly drained
- Construction would require generation of significant fill volumes or pier and beam foundations
- Property would have to be consolidated and purchased



This solution is interesting because it located between Wilson and E. Wheeler West of the seawall. Many parts of the site are raised to the level of the seawall (15ft) to provide views of the harbor and marina. The lakes shown are used to generate the fill material necessary to raise the site.

This hotel is located at the north end of the harbor west of the seawall. This one is similar to the first one in that lakes are excavated to raise the hotel to the level of the seawall.

West Side Hotel



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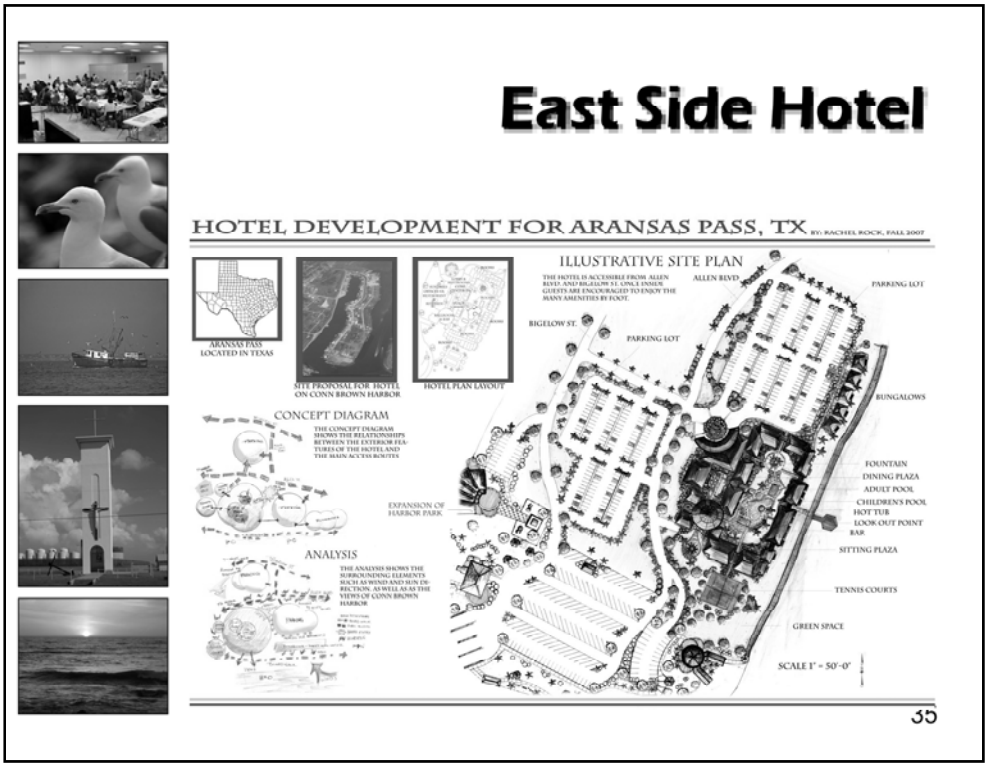
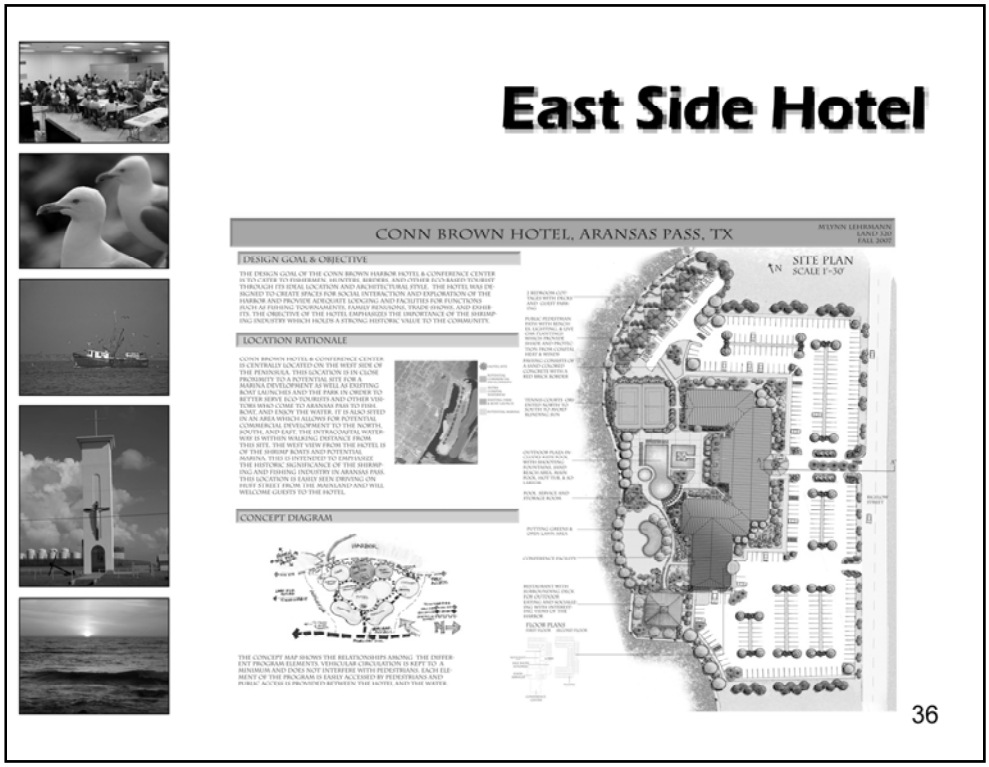


This hotel is on the east side of the harbor just north of harbor park It was envisioned as being associate with the park because it would have a new swimming beach.

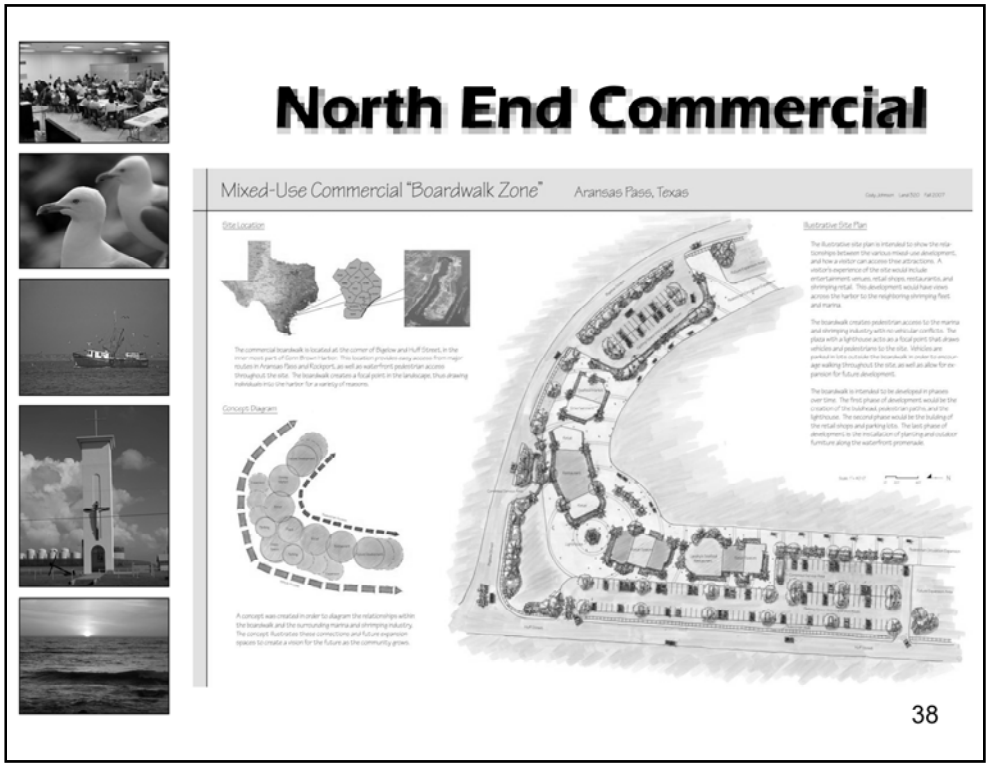


This student placed the hotel west of Bigelow street, which had to be relocated, the seawall was also pushed out into the harbor

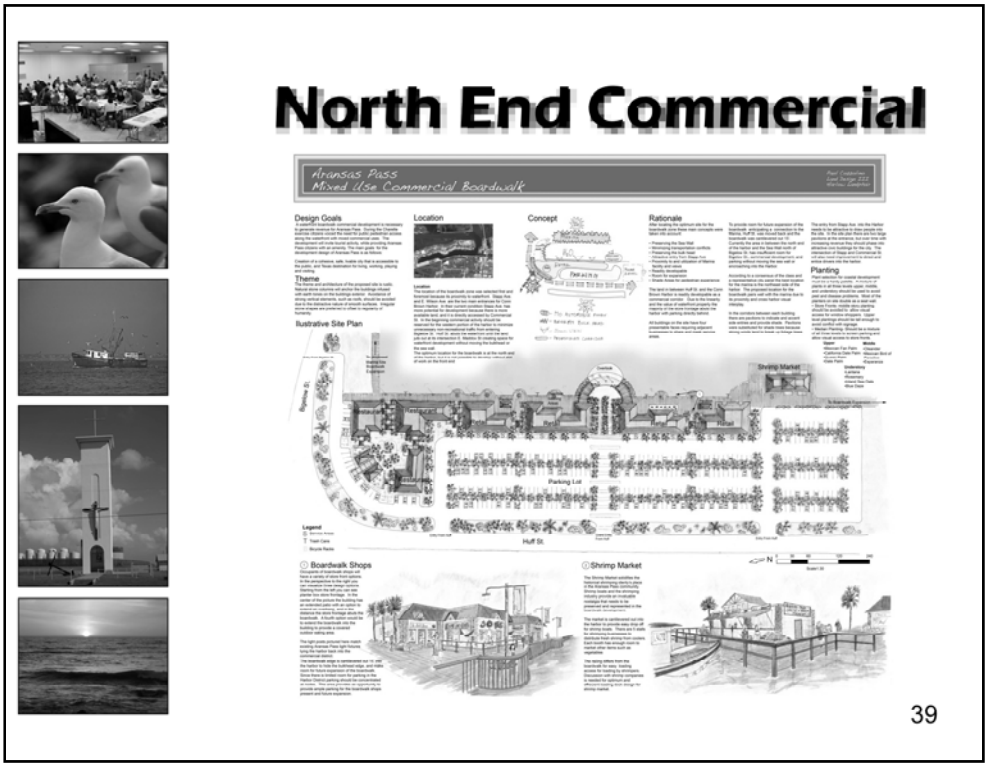
This project was intended to have the students explore how retail commercial could be integrated into the harbor. Almost universally the vision was for commercial properties to be developed along the harbor edge in association with a wide pedestrian area or "Boardwalk". This seems a very logical way to go and we could envision the development of the "Boardwalk as a requirement for any speculative retail or commercial ventures or the city may wish to undertake a phased development of a boardwalk area as an additional catalyst for development.

The program requirements give the students were:

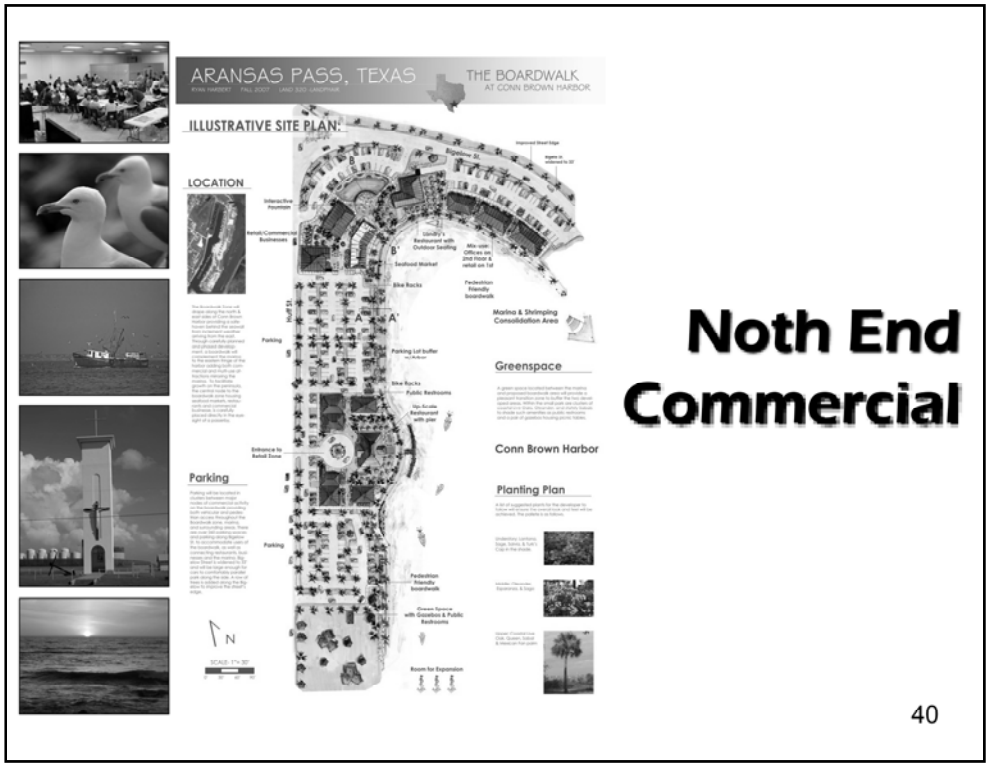
- Speculative retail space in modules from 900sf to 3,500sf
- Pedestrian promenade
- Parking (space/200sf of retail area)
- Buildings to be developed with an architectural theme



It was interesting that most every student placed the commercial areas at the intersection of Bigelow and Huff extending around the upper end of the harbor. This has some disadvantages since it is not real visible from Goodnight or Commercial St. But it certainly has the potential to be a very charming specialty commercial area with a mix of retail, restaurants and entertainment venues.

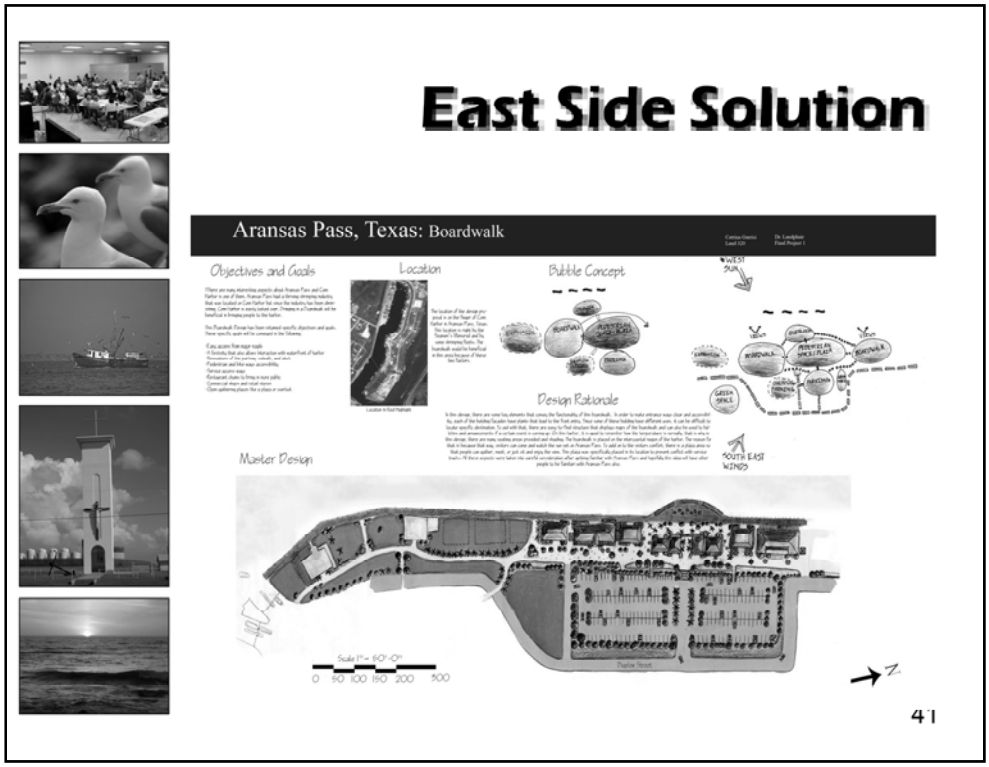


This solution is at the north end along Huff St. It does not extend along Bigelow. The board walk actually extends out from the seawall on piling to create some additional space.

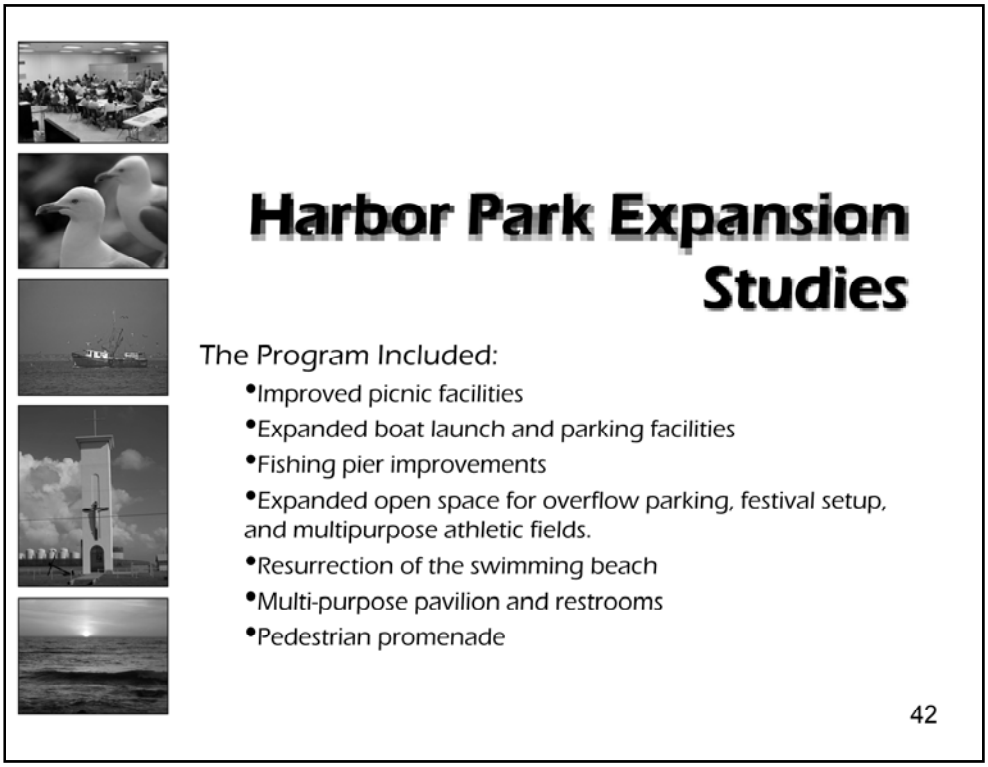


This solution breaks the rental development into two parts separated by parking. However, the pedestrian promenade continues along the entire waterfront area. Areas at the north end have been expended out into the harbor from the existing shoreline which is not bulk headed in some areas.

City Dock remains open and park like.



This is was one of the very few developments to the East side of the harbor. It relocates Bigelow street to get sufficient parking and connects the park and marina along the shore line.

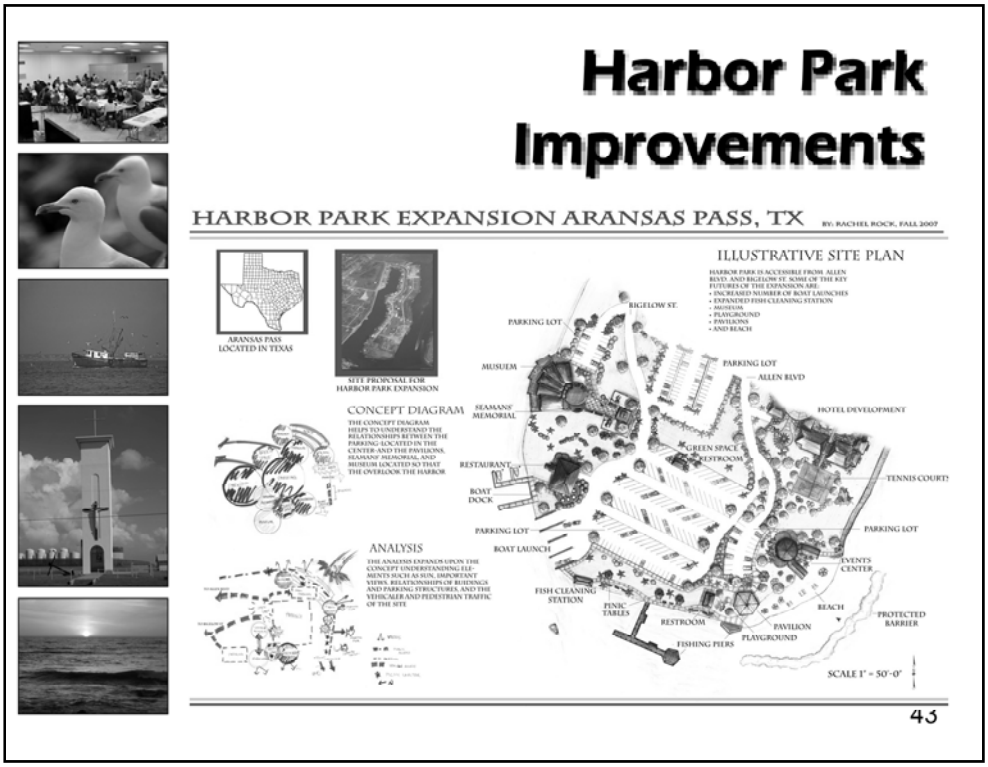


Harbor park is currently a boat launch facility parking lot and a green fringe with two fishing piers and some shelters. This is a prime piece of real estate and includes the Seaman's monument and a restroom. As noted in the land use studies there can be two schools of thought one is to improve the park in place the other is to move it in favor of a more economically productive land use at the harbor entrance.

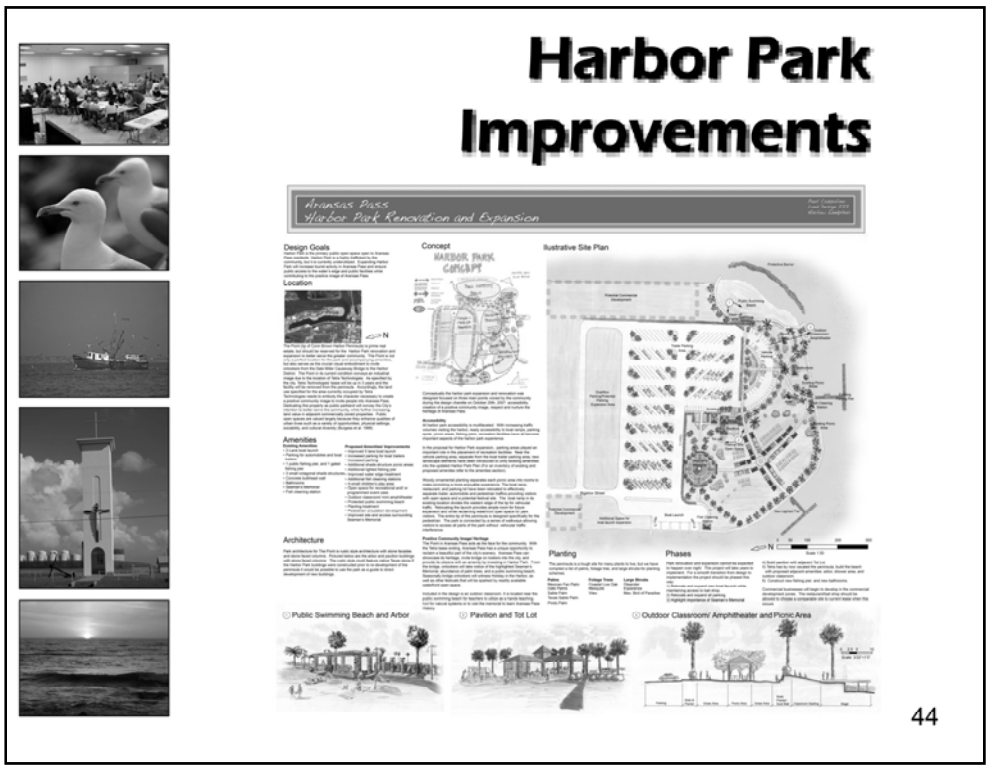
For some reason no one showed a park development solution anywhere but at the end of the harbor. This comes from discussions in the Charrette where practically every group made the assumption that the park would stay where it is and be improved. For this reason many left the parking and boat ramps where they were and expanded them in place. Others took more visionary approaches that would take longer to accomplish but certainly have merit worth further discussion.

The program they were given included

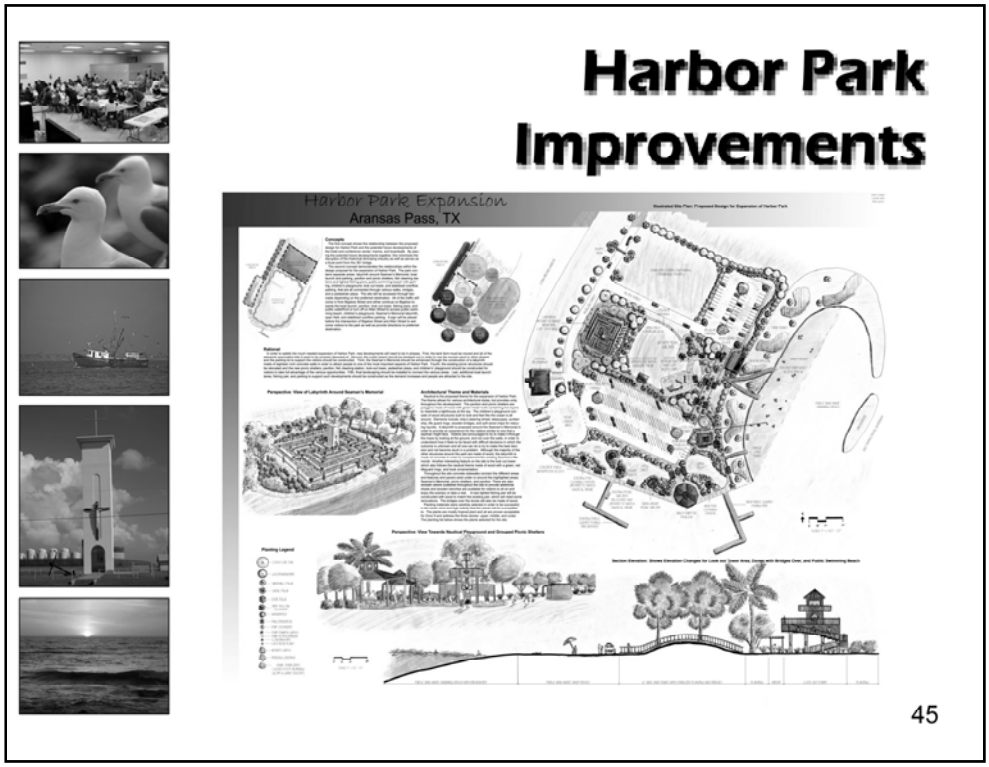
- Improved picnic facilities
- Expanded boat launch and parking facilities
- Fishing pier improvements
- Expanded open space for overflow parking, festival setup, and multipurpose athletic fields.
- Resurrection of the swimming beach
- Multi-purpose pavilion and restrooms
- Pedestrian promenade



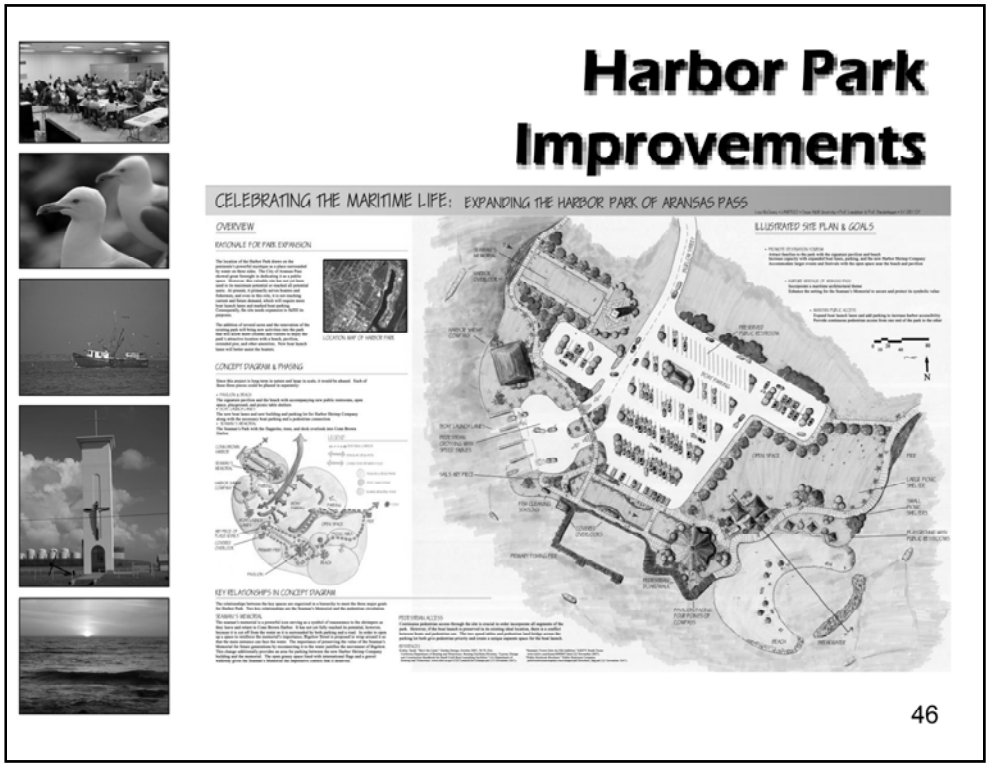
This solution expands the parking for the boat ramps and expands the launch area. This is one of the solutions that located a hotel just north of the park.



This solution recognizes that land at the point is much to valuable to be used as a parking lot. It moves the parking and boat launch facilities to the north and recaptures the point for a swimming beach and festival site. The plan shows a Shrimporee setup utilizing the open space for overflow parking and providing additional overflow to the far north.



This solution has a very large swimming beach and places utilizes the seaman's monument as a focal point in the park boat parking stays where it is but significant open space is provided for hosting festival events with plenty of overflow parking.



This solution moves the parking to a central location and adds a fun swimming beach pavilion area. However it mixes trailer parking with park users which is problematic if it can be avoided. The seaman's monument is redeveloped and open spaces is sufficient for festival set up and overflow parking.

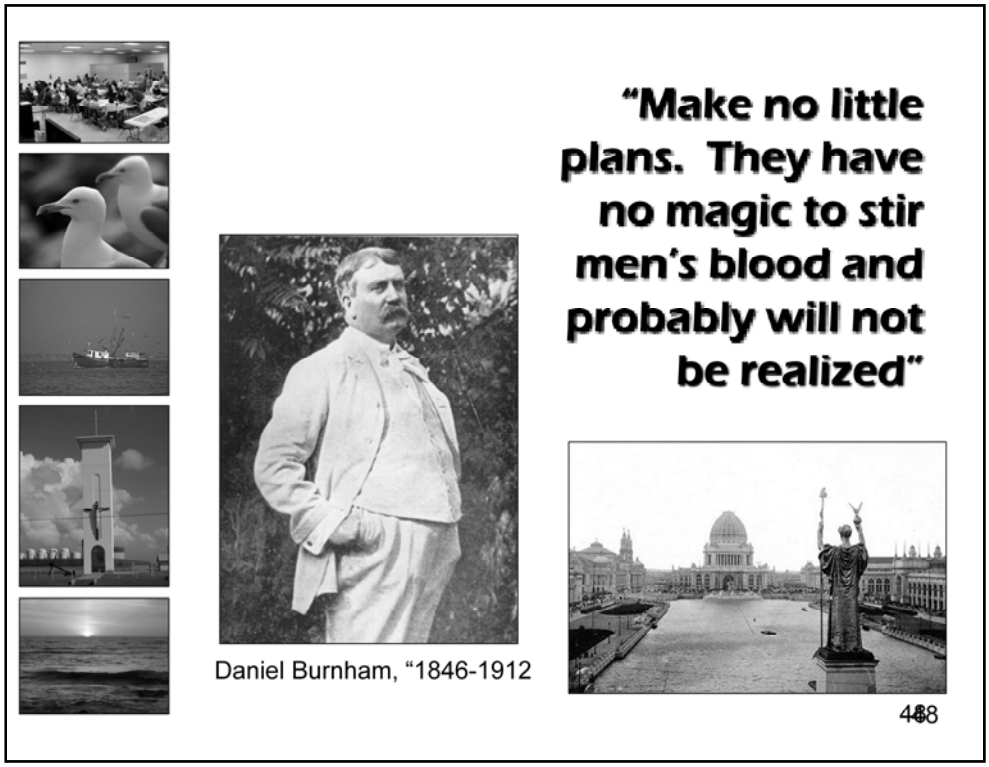
That is a brief overview of the different project types. The full range of projects is available in digital format which has been provided to the city.

This has been fun but we should ask What is Next.

Based on the Charrette and what the students heard it was felt that the most important thing is to maintain and open dialogue with the community and stakeholders as redevelopment moves forward. It appears that additional workshops or forums are needed to:

- Craft an Official Vision and Goals for Harbor Redevelopment.

At this point there is no officially adopted vision for the harbor. It is suggested that the city adopt a vision that will serve notice to the development community what the



As a final word, I began with old Daniel and I would like to end with him.

Let us not make any small or short sighted plans,

Our city is a jewel in rough, that with good planning and nurturing can be the Gem of the Texas Coast.

Thank You

Texas A&M University
Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

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On be half of my students Thank You.