

Chapter 8:

Treatment Philosophy for the Platt Historic District

BACKGROUND

The basic goals of any preservation treatment plan are to retain historic character and features; to mitigate negative change and deterioration where possible; to prevent future negative change, and to address the range of management issues affecting the property. In other words, preservation treatment is “not conducted in a vacuum,” and must consider a property’s financial resources, management capabilities, and proposed uses as well as its integrity, significance, and level of historic documentation.

The Platt Historic District is also guided by the National Park Service’s long-standing traditions and philosophies regarding the stewardship of natural and cultural resources. Generally speaking, these include the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, which requires the National Park Service to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Such ideas are, of course, outlined in “NPS 28: Cultural Resource Management” and the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. More specifically, the management of the Platt District is also guided by the park’s 1902 enabling legislation, which specifically calls for the “proper utilization and control” of the area’s springs and creeks. More recent management documents include the “General Management Plan, Chickasaw National Recreation Area” (1980), the “Draft Statement for Management” (1990) and the “Amendment to the General Management Plan” (1994). In addition, a new General Management Plan was begun in 2002, and it is hoped that the recommendations of this report will be incorporated into that document.

TREATMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Secretary of the Interior has specified standards for four approaches to the treatment of historic properties. These approaches represent a continuum of allowable change and impact. **Preservation** concentrates on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and the retention of a property’s form as it has evolved over time. **Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to meet continuing or changing uses through alterations or new additions while retaining a property’s historic character. **Restoration** is undertaken to depict a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods. **Reconstruction** recreates vanished or non-surviving properties, usually for interpretive purposes.

In selecting a preservation treatment for a landscape, one of these four treatments is usually selected as a “primary” treatment for the property as a whole. This primary, or property-wide, treatment provides a broad philosophical framework within which treatment decisions for individual features may be made. Treatment of individual features must be consistent with the overall treatment for the district, but they may not necessarily be the same. For example, a landscape undergoing restoration may contain a building undergoing rehabilitation, so that while its façade retains a restoration period appearance, the interior is rehabilitated for a new use. Within a treatment plan for the Platt District, then, individual sites or component landscapes might be slated for different treatments based on their individual condition and integrity, as long as they are consistent with the overall district treatment.

IMPLICATIONS OF TREATMENTS FOR THE PLATT DISTRICT

Preservation

Preservation is an appropriate treatment when features, materials, and spaces are intact, and depiction at a distinct period or time is not appropriate. Preservation generally maintains, stabilizes, protects, and repairs fabric and features, though limited replacement of features is permitted.

Because of its overall high integrity and numerous extant features, preservation would be an appropriate treatment for the Platt District. Indeed, maintenance and repair of landscape features has been the management approach within the park for many years. A preservation treatment would focus on retaining all elements from the district's lengthy history, including those from the Mission 66 years and later, expressing the district's evolution over time. Existing features would be retained and repaired, but new features would generally not be added, except for limited and sensitive upgrading of systems to meet code requirements. However, such upgrading could include changes to plumbing, sewers, electrical systems, and to pedestrian routes to provide universal access to park features.

Within the overall district, individual sites or component landscapes exhibit varied integrity and feature retention. As a result, treatments for these individual landscapes or for features within them might be more or less restrictive than the overall district.

Rehabilitation

This treatment makes possible a compatible new use through repairs and additions, yet preserves fabric and features that convey historic significance and value. Features may be replaced or repaired in a compatible way or as an accurate restoration; additions and alterations must be undertaken so that they are compatible yet clearly distinguished as new construction.

Rehabilitation would be an appropriate treatment for the Platt District in the face of any impending change. Such change might include major improvements required for new infrastructure as outlined in the park's management documents or for providing ADA access to the larger area of the district. Rehabilitation may be particularly appropriate for specific areas of the district and less appropriate for other areas where change is neither necessary nor anticipated. For example, the provision of ADA access to important experiences in the district is an issue relevant for most of the component landscapes in the district, though the impacts of providing such access varies from landscape to landscape and from feature to feature.

Restoration

A restoration treatment is based on substantial documentary evidence and returns a landscape to its appearance and condition at a specific point in time. Restoration should be undertaken only when a design or historical significance outweighs the loss of material from other time periods. Care must also be taken not to create a sense of false history by restoring features that never existed together historically.

Although substantial historic documentation of the Platt District exists for most time periods, the feasibility of Restoration as a treatment for the Platt District would mostly depend on the choice of a specific date for restoration. The obvious choice would be 1940, or the end of the period of significance. However, restoring the landscape to this date would require the removal of important extant features such as Rock Creek Campground, Travertine Nature Center, and Mission 66 comfort stations. In addition, restoring portions of the landscape, such as Buffalo and Antelope Springs, to 1940, would be costly and difficult, given the level of removals that occurred in the 1960s. Thus, restoration of the entire district to 1940 seems unfeasible and is not recommended. However, restoration of individual features or elements within the district to their appearance and condition in 1940 may be appropriate and recommended.

Another choice would be to select a later date for restoration, such as 1969, the end to the Mission 66 changes in the landscape. At this time, all current features were in place. While restoration to this date would appear to be possible, documentation of the precise conditions of 1969 is somewhat less than for the period of significance. In addition, the choice of such a restoration date would require the reconstruction of non-extant and non-significant features dating to that period, such as the wood amphitheater located in the former Elk Pasture area. Furthermore, the 1969 period is not yet considered historic, due to the 50-year rule. Thus restoration of the entire district to a later date, such as 1969, is not recommended.

Reconstruction

This treatment is appropriate only for lost or non-surviving properties. Because the Platt District is an

extant landscape with high integrity, reconstruction of the district is not a relevant treatment.

PROPOSED OVERALL TREATMENT

A proposed treatment plan for the Platt District is shown in Figure 8-1. Given the high integrity of the district, the desire to depict the continuing evolution of the property over time, and the need to retain the districts' extant historic fabric, the overall proposed treatment for the district is Preservation. However, due to a need to effect moderate infrastructural and ecological change within the wider district, the plan proposes a Rehabilitation treatment for a number of the individual component landscapes within the district.

Aspects of a rehabilitation treatment are in particular necessary to provide for infrastructural upgrading. The recent perimeter road project might be considered a good example of a district-wide rehabilitation project, as a project that involved the roadway's repair, the replacement of its surface in-kind, and the limited upgrading of some elements such as curbs and guide rails to meet current highway standards for safety and drainage. Rehabilitation is also important in allowing ADA access to many of the district's important and currently inaccessible experiences, including significant overlooks and opportunities to engage the district's

mineral springs by touching, drinking, and seeing water. Finally, as described in the Vegetation Management Plan (Chapter 10) treatment of the park's cover vegetation might also be best considered a rehabilitation treatment. Since much of the cedar forest present today is the direct result of the designer's actions, removal of this forest may not technically be considered restoration. However, its removal is necessary to provide for fire protection, improved pasturage for bison, reduced plant invasion, and for restoring views and viewsheds. Thus, it might be best considered rehabilitation for improved, if not new, usage.

Clearly, such rehabilitation is not necessary in many areas of the park. Because of the park's significance and integrity, preservation—the retention of historic features and fabric—is considered the appropriate “philosophy” when considering the district as whole. Yet balancing the idea of limited but necessary change within a context of overall preservation is still an important and necessary goal of the proposed treatment. In general, the overall concept of district treatment might be considered as an initial or preliminary Rehabilitation treatment of specific areas, followed by a long-term or continuing policy of Preservation of the district as a whole.

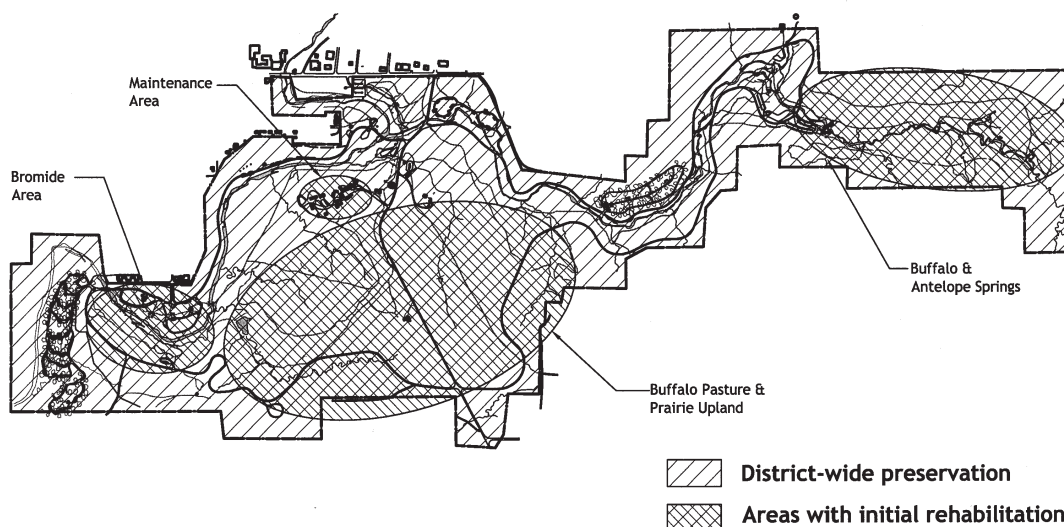


Figure 8-1. Preservation treatment philosophy for the Platt Historic District.

ORGANIZATION OF TREATMENT PLAN

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Platt District is that, as large and complex as it is, it has over more than 60 years, retained an incredibly high level of integrity. This is due in part to the high quality of the original, “built-for-the-ages” construction, and the restraint shown by later managers in adding minimal and compatible new elements to the park’s original design. High integrity is also in no small part due to consistent, dedicated, and meticulous effort by park staff in maintaining, repairing, and stewarding the landscape.

The Treatment Plan that follows in the next two chapters is largely intended to uphold this tradition of quality construction, restraint, and consistent maintenance. As a result, it is formatted into two sections. Chapter 9 proposes a set of district-wide management guidelines. These guidelines are intended to capture and formalize existing cultural landscape management practices as well as outline new and recommended management practices that address issues described in meetings or communications with park staff. Guidelines will address issues that are common to the entire district, such as the consistent appearance of small-scale features such as garbage cans or footbridges or the care, repair and preservation of historic masonry. Chapter 10 takes a closer look at guidelines for the management of a key district feature, vegetation. Finally, Chapter 11 provides an individualized treatment plan for each of the district’s component landscapes. These plans include an overall description of the treatment strategy for the entire component landscape, followed by a series of specific projects addressing issues and features.