Reimagining a Past Reality: Tactical Design Interventions for Historic Sites

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Abstract
Interpretation is communication at its most basic essence. As a tool for historic sites and house museums, this focused and message-driven communication is both necessary and refined, and as unique as each particular site. For many the lost historic material, be it at the building or landscape scale, is vital to convey the type of physical experience which helps visitors make important connections. Reconstruction, especially to the NPS standard, is unfortunately both expensive and time consuming and the increased competition for grant funding has put it out of reach for most sites. This thesis examines the idea of applying a current planning tool, tactical urbanism, as a way to gain insights into how such strategic interpretive decisions and processes work at historic sites. By studying this process as both a larger concept and applying it to an actual place, The Woodlands, in West Philadelphia, PA, this study is able to show that tactical urbanism is a possible method of interpretive planning and a preservation process because it can include history and acknowledge the layers of a place without requiring the destruction of that past. By learning from what occurs through a flexible, actual, relatively low-cost, constructed design, the historic site can better serve its core preservation and education missions and audiences through careful response to visitors’ impressions and understanding. As an ongoing process, with real community input, tactical urbanism projects have a greater ability to create long-term relationships with individual visitors because they build on conversations and feedback.

Keywords
tactical urbanism, The Woodlands, interpretation, historic sites, placemaking

Disciplines
Historic Preservation and Conservation

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REIMAGINING A PAST REALITY: TACTICAL DESIGN INTERVENTIONS FOR HISTORIC SITES

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A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Science in Historic Preservation

2016

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend many thanks to Jessica Baumert, Executive Director of The Woodlands both for her support on this project and all she has taught me about the true ins and outs of site management. Two years at The Woodlands has proven equally valuable to two years at Penn, thankfully someone decided to invent work-study jobs.

I would not have been able to craft and develop the following interpretive plan and design without the guidance of my advisor Laura C. Keim. Her practical experience and thoughtful advice have proven invaluable in stepping into the role of imaginative storyteller.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their continuous love and support. At a young age, I decided I would go to graduate school when “I grew up” and they embraced the academic in me even when I threw out crazy preservation parlance. I would not be here without their guidance, love and support. Thank you both.

J.D.G.
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Introduction

Estimates posit that there are approximately 15,000 historic house museums in operation in the United States today, making the historic house museum one of, if not the most, ubiquitous symbol of historic preservation. At one time, the historic house museum located in a town’s lone historic district or anchoring an historic Main Street stood as the pinnacle method of preservation for important historic structures. What began with Ann Pamela Cunningham in 1858 and her Mount Vernon Ladies Association exploded to produce approximately four historic houses per county. Regardless of age or origin, historic house museums today all face the same reality—more competition for resources, understaffing, waning public interest, and lagging community support. Distinction among historic sites today is not derived from the individual historical figures or events important to a place, but the ability of staff and volunteers to develop and expand narratives to connect with neighboring community members.

According to James Vaughan, a previous Vice President for Stewardship of Historic Sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Americans love to save old buildings. But a lot of them are not nationally significant enough to draw the sort of attendance to make them financially sustainable.” In her 2013 speech in Indianapolis, Stephanie Meeks, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, speaks to this same

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issue. She begins by declaring her love of historic house museums and sites, particularly the transformative nature of stepping across the threshold of a place into the actual room where a prominent figure lived, thought and impacted America.\(^4\) And yet, she explains, more often than not, house museums are struggling.\(^5\)

Before and during her tenure with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Meeks and others conducted research and concluded that 15 million people are engaged in preservation but are not connected with or interested in a connection with the National Trust, not because they do not agree with the mission of the organization.\(^6\) These younger, more diverse individuals are not interested in the typical “velvet rope” tour that many historic house museums offer. Adaptive reuse or restoration-for-use are attractive to these people.\(^7\) The larger and more bureaucratic an entity, the slower it is to change. Some of the original, modern facilitators of preservation such as the National Trust and the National Park Service are still attempting to adjust to the needs of these younger individuals. And yet, despite the shifting professional emphases, “How do I start a house museum?,” continues to be one of the most asked questions from the public when discussing preservation.\(^8\)

Meeks proposes that instead of debating the historic house museum model as it operates today, it is more useful to address the original goal of almost all the museums: to protect important houses and sites from destruction.\(^9\) Individuals like Meeks and the local Philadelphia author and preservationist, Donna Ann Harris, and others have laid out

\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid.
numerous strategies to offer preservation-minded individuals options other than simply creating a financially draining entity. Presenting at a national conference of the American Association for State and Local History, Barbara Silberman, a specialist in historic sites and museums, was the first to radically declare that there are too many historic house museums.\(^\text{10}\)

The sheer number of house museums and the continued reliance on the model as a viable solution show the close relationship in the public’s mind between historic preservation and historic house museums. Her notion challenges the responsible or traditional type of preservation – save house, and then create museum to ensure continued protection. Silberman is clear that just because the model is flawed does not mean the buildings should be destroyed, they are, in fact, an important part of American history and require stewardship, just not necessarily as public museum spaces run by non-profit entities.

While it may be true that some of the houses currently operating as museums should return to a useful life in the private sphere, there are an equal number with a great deal to teach us about life in the past. Just as Donnelly explained in her introduction to *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, the house or a place of residence is a universally understood concept.\(^\text{11}\) We evaluate people based on their house or lack of, and in the United States, the icon of the American household embodies or represents a condensed version of the diverse values and themes that have shaped the landscape of the country.\(^\text{12}\) Houses, whether mansions or tenement apartments, structure the lives of the people who inhabit them and in turn are shaped by the owners. While all historic sites have the ability to expose visitors to historical themes, the house is an ideal platform for discussing an all-encompassing range of

\(^{10}\) Godfrey, Silberman and Barrientos, “What to Do With These Old Houses.”


narratives, because the concept of shelter is a fundamental human need to which individual
visitors have a specific relationship.\(^\text{13}\) By their nature, historic houses offer glimpses into the
past lives of Americans, the renowned, the average, and the unknown. Vaughan, though
quick to point out the failures of many organizations to plan financially, is also swift to
protect these “small gems,” or “tangible reminders of the past traditions and culture of our
country,” which at any scale, from mansion to cottage, to vacation retreat, offer glimpses
into the identity and soul of place, of community.\(^\text{14}\) So, the question remains: how can
historic house museums combat decreasing audiences, build communities, expand narratives
without overextending, and operate sustainably?

One clear trend has been a transition from a focus on the life of the elite, wealthy,
white landowner to a tour or interpretive signage which includes the lives of women, slaves
or servants who were integral to the function of the daily life at the site. Bringing these
stories to light allows a historic place to tell a fuller story, balancing the life of a wealthy
patriarch with the everyday life of his family and household staff. In fact, what better way to
show just how wealthy an individual was than to compare his wealth to the meager property
owned by someone who worked for, or was owned by, him? A major roadblock to this
narrative expansion is not necessarily access to information about these individuals, though
that is sometimes the case, but the destruction of the spaces and landscapes within a site that
speak to the service of a house. Store rooms, closets and less grand rooms are often the first
to be converted into space for offices, HVAC retrofitting and other storage, meaning they
are not readily available for interpretation. These disruptions can impede visitor experience

\(^{13}\) Donnelly, ed., \textit{Interpreting Historic House Museums}, 3-7.

\(^{14}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 3-7.
of spatial relationships as they would have existed in the past. It is also particularly problematic for features in the landscape, such as outbuildings, service paths or temporary housing, which have often been eclipsed by modern, interior technologies like running water.

These resulting gaps have necessitated bridges, which vary both in application and efficacy. With a goal toward enlivening a lost past, this thesis will explore the numerous ways that both past and current site managers and stewards have tried to recreate the past for more meaningful interpretation. By understanding previous interpretive mechanisms, through images and signage or an actual physical structure extrapolated from archaeology or other documentation, site managers faced with the same problems can understand and prioritize options available to them, and strategize for their own site. At the same time, both the successes and especially the failures of the past, can push site managers to consider or look for alternatives to those strategies routinely employed.

One particular and more recent problem has been a decrease in available funding, particularly grant funding, and an increase in the number of historic sites seeking grants to maintain their non-profits as opposed to enhancing the interpretive narratives. Given the reduced funds, it is important for historic sites to consider other more temporary and cost effective solutions to continue the work of stewarding and caring for the narratives and material legacy of a place. This thesis will apply tactical urbanism as a methodology of engagement and incremental development adapted to an interpretive outcome, as a way to facilitate experiential physical intervention in the landscape without the high cost of a recreation. Using The Woodlands, a cemetery and historic mansion in West Philadelphia, as a test site, the designed intervention intends to model a project to demonstrate its efficacy to
an audience, and to potentially convince a granting organization of the viability of such an installation on a sustainable scale.

This thesis starts by laying out the history of interpretation and current strategies employed by historic sites to explain the key narratives of an individual site. Beginning with the work of Enos Mills and the precursor to Rocky Mountain National Park and extending through the work of Freeman Tilden, the first chapter explains how interpretation has grown from a tool for the natural landscape to one for numerous narratives. Building on this foundational history, the chapter then describes the expansion of interpretive methodologies necessitated by technological and educational changes in the late 20th and 21st centuries. This growth and adaptation resulted in the corresponding inclusion of broader swaths of land and groups of people so historic sites are better able to illustrate the significance of place.

Following this exploration of the foundation of interpretation as it has been and is performed, the specific placemaking strategy called tactical urbanism will be explored. First, the current National Park Service standards for reconstruction are laid out to better acquaint the reader with the substantial burden on financial and staff resources to appropriately meet the prescribed requirements. The inclusion of the standards is necessary because it sets up the dilemma faced by historic sites today, the desire to invigorate the imagination of visitors and to recreate a lost reality that they cannot see, all against a background of limited funds. One answer presented and advocated for in this thesis is a tactical urbanism approach for its ability to serve as a tool of preservation and interpretation. Historic preservation at its core is a discipline which stratifies, evaluates and reimagines the various layers of a place, and tactical urbanism is able to facilitate the accomplishment of this new vision without inflicting permanent change on the place, leaving space for experimentation and exploring the
ramifications of trial and error. An understanding of the motivations and mechanics of tactical projects conceived for either a theoretical or actual place helps to enlighten readers to the internal workings of application. The case studies outlined in Chapter Two: Tactical Urbanism, A Means to Continue Change, offer a glimpse of the tactical urbanism philosophy at work by paying particular attention to projects implemented in and around Philadelphia and on a global stage. The individual parks and installations are tangible proof that this strategic thinking is not an all-or-nothing proposition but one which is well equipped to constant improvement through the evaluation of outcomes.

Finally, the methods are applied to an actual place, The Woodlands, as a way to develop and describe both the process of tactical planning and the resulting design. The solution presented is one possible resolution to current interpretive gaps that exist at the site and it follows the methodology of tactical urbanism. In this thesis, tactical urbanism is defined as a physical and experiential, playful process producing low-cost, agile designs to organize space. Solutions resulting from this method will have the flexibility to accommodate community input and react accordingly. The proposed design components allow its flexibility to be expanded or contracted depending on the budget or available staff time. By examining an application of this tactical urbanism methodology to an actual place, this thesis offers an understanding of how such strategic interpretive decisions and processes work at historic sites, the parameters of which are quite distinct from individual parking space or public city lands.
Chapter One: Interpretation, A History

“The aim is to illuminate and reveal the alluring world.”

Interpretation, the action of explaining or elucidating meaning, is communication at its most basic essence. As a tool for historic sites and house museums, this focused and message-driven communication is both necessary and refined, and is as unique as the history of each particular site. The formula for successful interpretation requires first determining what a site has to say, and then, the best way to say it. While this process requires nuanced decision-making, these two components, the message and the mode of communication, are foundational determinations anchoring an interpretive plan, which in turn serves as a guiding mechanism for every visitor experience at a historic site. If a site’s staff and board cannot agree on the best ways to answer these questions, particularly what the site has to say, then the interpretive process will not result in a cohesive or successful plan from which to make future decisions. Because of the fundamental nature of interpretive choices, understanding the ways sites have previously privileged and prioritized particular narratives in the past and will continue to do so with new narratives is an important part of the process. This understanding, community and stakeholder interests and input, and site history combine with recent methodological developments in the historic preservation field that have fostered inclusivity, additional complexities, and a visitor-driven approach to historic sites.

Though interpretation happened at the first historic sites, the origins of interpretation as practiced today are rooted in the natural environment. More specifically, the acknowledgment that communicating about natural and historic resources was not the same
as teaching in a classroom or promoting a product, and thus required different tactics began, with the National Park Service. Enos Mills (1870-1922), considered by many to be the founder or father of interpretation, worked in Colorado leading groups through the lands which eventually became Rocky Mountain National Park.\textsuperscript{16} One of his most important contributions to the interpretation field was understanding that the more a visitor knows about a place, the greater a visitor’s propensity to feel attachment and, as a result, the more predisposed he or she is to protect that place.\textsuperscript{17}

Today, regardless of the genesis of any particular historic house museum or site, one of the most important ways to ensure a site’s continued survival is through the expression of its value and meaning to various communities and individuals either geographically near it or to a larger, national identity group. Just as Mills was a pioneering guide for those interested in sharing knowledge about nature, historic site interpretation began with the musings of writer and National Park promoter, Freeman Tilden (1883-1980), in the late 1950s. Tilden’s innovative beliefs about interpretation and its potential, led him to generate his own definition of interpretation, writing,

An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.\textsuperscript{18}

For Tilden and those who followed both his instruction and his path of inquiry, the idea that interpretation was an enhanced version of communication became key. It was not enough to simply know information and, like a teacher, to dictate it to an audience. The good interpreter must craft information into something tangible and personal, building a story

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
with more than one path of expression, which could capture imagination, enliven inanimate objects, and, to use a contemporary phrase, “create buy-in.”

Tilden built his approach to interpretation around six principles, and while he wrote and published them in 1957, they have continued to resonate with people who study and practice interpretation at historic sites today. He argued that interpretation had to connect with personal stories and original objects; information was not enough.\(^\text{19}\) He believed interpretation was an art, and by its nature could be, to some degree, taught.\(^\text{20}\) Tilden pushed individuals to think of interpretation as a provocation and something which considered the entirety of a site, not single pieces or phases. Finally, he argued that interpretation must be tailored to the audience, altering in approach for children, as opposed to simply watering down the adult version.\(^\text{21}\) While straightforward, Tilden’s principles are hardly simplistic. Success in applying his principles requires a substantial amount of knowledge about the anticipated audiences and stakeholders at any one historic site or house and a deeper knowledge of the site than may be presented to any given audience.

Tilden, a man who documented his appreciation for the National Parks in the United States through his own travels and writings, produced a flexible framework structure any single park could use to successfully highlight the unique or exemplary characteristics of place. He clearly stated, often through his career-long writings, that while interpretation was a concept he had studied and shared with others, he never believed that he completely grasped interpretation as concept, or at least that there were facets he could not explain with

\(^{19}\) Tilden, 16-19.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 16-19.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 16-19.
one hundred percent confidence.\textsuperscript{22} The writings Tilden published on the subject have maintained their efficacy through the decades and \textit{Interpreting Our Heritage} (1957) continues to serve as a Bible of interpretation. Almost all current writings about site interpretation reference his views as the basis from which they critique, clarify, or expand on the relevance and application of his original six principles, to either the process or the final product.

Ted Cable and Larry Beck admitted that they too grappled with a number of the same questions as Freeman Tilden. Their work, particularly \textit{Interpretation for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture} (2002), took Tilden’s original six principles and expanded them. Instead of recreating the work of Mills and Tilden, Cable and Beck expanded on Tilden and others and articulated their view that the interpretive process and experience are significantly individual - for the person performing the work, the visitors receiving the interpreted meaning, and the site itself.\textsuperscript{23} Multiple times they pointed out their belief that the interpretive process is creative and must go beyond the simple teacher-student dynamic so prevalent in classrooms around the world. By comparing interpretation to an art, both in practice and as a final product, they imbued the entire endeavor with an inherent individuality mirroring the unique resources that are interpreted.

Following the work of Cable and Beck, Lisa Brochu, a certified interpretive planner, outlined her response to the interpretive principles laid out by those before her.\textsuperscript{24} Her additions, though clearly intended to enhance the process of planning a strategy, also


\textsuperscript{23} Beck and Cable, “Meaning of Interpretation,” 2.

\textsuperscript{24} The National Association for Interpretation offers certification and training programs for qualified individuals. There are six certification categories each defined by the type of work or visitor interaction one’s position entails. Eligibility is based on education, equivalent work experience or a combination of the two. More information can be found here: https://www.interpnet.com/nai/Certification/nai/_certification/NAI_Certification.aspx?hkey=0c08ac07-c574-4560-940f-82fba3a22be9.
contribute to the way an individual or an organization should think about communicating value to its constituency. Her five additional insights, which she calls her Principles of Interpretive Planning, include listening and responding, not only to verbal clues, but also to the “subtext” that exists in human body language as well as the physical surroundings of a “resource” or site. Her third principle draws from a quotation of John Muir’s, “when you try to pick out anything by itself, you find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

This idea of interconnectedness is particularly important for historic sites because the myriad decisions that brought about the creation of a house, landscape or other resource were in reaction to other cultural factors existing at the time. Beyond simply acknowledging the existence of the world outside the historic walls, Brochu also added that each project is unique, different enough that the result will be equally so, even if there are common elements.

Brochu’s 5 Ms are Management, Markets, Message, Mechanics and Media. She presents them as a simplified version of the important questions to be answered as a part of the planning process. Covering the operations, audience, story, physical limitations of the site, and the method of delivery, Brochu explains that in each situation these five elements must be understood and then balanced, based on the answers and the resource. These “Ms,” combined with the principles she laid out necessitate having a clear idea about every part of a place before a site invests significant time, energy and capital into an interpretive planning project. Her final principle proved essential for the consideration of historic

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
resources: “everyone must win, but ultimately, the winner must be the resource itself.”

Historic preservation professionals can never forget that they, along with the community members or stakeholders they bring into the process, must always think about the ramifications of their choices on historic fabric.

The literature surrounding interpretation at historic sites and museums is a fascinating amalgamation of planning, teaching and questioning which provide museum professionals with the necessary lenses to understand the specific site in their care. Interpretation is not simply the sharing of specific facts and figures, but is a “translation,” in which the interpreter has trained to understand the history, the people, and the objects, and can convey that totality to an audience through filters of personalization, modern parlance, artifacts, and site-specific concepts. Interpretation is far more than simply knowing the history of a building, its collection, an object, or a landscape. Planning alone or implementation alone will not produce the desired result. There must be a site staff commitment to understanding the entirety of a site and knowing how to turn that knowledge into the most compelling deliverable stories possible. The interpretive plan must constitute a crafted framework for a narrative that has considered what to say and the most feasible way to say it based on the organization’s capacity. For the approximately 15,000 historic sites and house museums operating in the United States today, well-grounded, well delivered interpretation is a key component of success and is difficult to achieve.

Given the total number of sites and the competition for resources, the historic house museum is an ideal platform for an interpretive technique Sam H. Ham calls “labeling.”

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According to his definition, this is the idea that individuals will pay more attention to the things which remind them of themselves or their particular social groups.\(^{32}\) If people are more apt to pay attention to and presumably give money or time to things with which they can identify, then engaging and frank interpretive discussions, signage and planning are a necessary part of the house museum or historic site operation. Ham’s point circles back to and reinforces the argument for discovering and articulating the things which give each site distinctiveness of place, identifying the characteristics which are are required for success.

At most historic sites, this type of relationship-building with visitors requires the use of imagination on the part of the site and its guests. Even the most heavily documented sites or historic characters leave unknowns behind, gaps in information which can only be filled by educated conjecture. Words like “imagine” or “pretend” are common parlance in tours to help people enter a mindset of comparing their own personal experiences with those described by the staff. Particularly for sensitive or complex subjects, well-executed interpretation leads visitors to new information and sources but does not endeavor to force one solution on a diverse audience. Bringing these unknowns to the forefront and asking visitors to create answers for themselves, whether they share them or not, helps to paint a broader image in their minds of what life really could have been like. The introduction of mystery is especially important when considering the addition of new narratives such as those of servants or the enslaved because there are fewer extant primary documents for these subverted groups of people. By including mystery in the process of interpretation, a site is foregrounding that it does not have all of the answers, as opposed to allowing visitors

\(^{32}\) Ham, *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose*, 41.
to assume everything presented is one hundred percent accurate, something no historic site can boast.

Interpretation is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Stephen Hague and Laura Keim’s chapter in the Small Museum Toolkit (2012) clearly intended to show that more often than not situations arise which require different types or combinations of interpretive media. In the same way that Ham called for individuality, that same information may be presented in different ways. The authors are also clear that each interaction a staff member has with someone outside the organization offers an opportunity to grow the site’s community and increase communication between staff members and potential visitors. In their view, interpretation has grown to include things which are not necessarily capitol “I” interpretation but encompass the regular business of historic site management. This distinct shift means that the most utilized methodologies of the past, either a trained guide to explain the narrative and carry the visitor along or a posted sign to perform that same provocation, are but a few of the ways that the narratives of a place are distributed to a wider audience. This, however, begs the question of how to take the important components of good interpretive methodologies and apply them to situations where a guide is not available. Hague and Keim argue the key to this way of operating is flexibility, that all staff members should receive training and have access to the site’s interpretive resources, and that the responsibilities of interpretation are not limited to those who are hired for that specific purpose.34

33 Hague and Keim, Small Museum Toolkit 5.
34 Ibid.
Indeed, the flexibility suggested in the Small Museum Toolkit also signals a key shift in the last few decades, specifically the transition between an interpretive focus on the house and its collection to include the surrounding landscape or neighborhood and the stories it has to share. Renee Friedman’s essay in the Department of the Interior’s Cultural Resource Management Thematic Issue on Landscape Interpretation (1994) explains this change quite simply, “history explores the ‘whys,’ not just the ‘whats.’” For Friedman and for others, the details of furniture or art are interesting, but the traditional house tour through the collection alone ignores the relationship the house and its inhabitants had with the surrounding landscape. The collections of historic sites, she argues, simply represent the larger patterns of culture which professionals are attempting to express to visitors in an effort to educate, engage, and converse. While it was perhaps not included in the early planning processes, more often than not what a historic site wishes to tell its visitors has something to do with the landscape, sometimes realizing it has more importance to a site than the contents of the house.

Yet, while this attention on the landscape could be seen as a new phenomenon, the seeds of stewardship, protection and individual identity built on knowledge of place were sewn with those first tours in Colorado. But, simply discussing the natural beauty of the landscapes would not be sufficiently effective to articulate the human intervention in the land around mansions or mills. So the question remains, how can the traditional interpretive model be adapted to include the landscape, something which by definition has significant scale, multiple layers and is continuously changing? Richard Rabinowitz writing in the same CRM thematic issue, argues there are three types of landscape interpretation. The first is an addition to the landscape, simply a sign and lookout point added to what is already there, the

second is “extrinsic,” meaning about the place but not actually in that place. The third he describes as “stones in a graveyard,” a more self-guided interpretive journey including elements of signage or direction, markers to help a visitor move through in a meaningful way. The intention of his essay is to push designers and architects beyond what he calls “the ubiquitous (and I would generally say boring) plaques or way-side graphic panels,” and to consider other, more creative means of enticing visitors to learn and appreciate landscapes of all types. Rabinowitz’s specific examples including the work of Lloyd Lillie, the installation of a trolley car frame or other sculptural figures mirror a number of the suggestions made in Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan’s Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums (2016), where the authors also promote the use of art and less conventional means to communicate meaning. While the Anarchist’s Guide specifically calls for contemporary art installations, such a literal reading of this advice may not be a feasible solution for many sites, particularly when the actual costs of hosting, installing and compensating a professional artist are calculated. These two separate calls to consider interpretation through means distinctly different from the traditional sign or guidebook methodology are important for the future of this field. While The Anarchist’s Guide fails to address many important realities including how to finance these short-term installations with increased competition for grants and proposals for turning these temporary audience members into regular members and donors, the

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37 Rabinowitz, CRM Vol. 17 No. 7, 10-11, 15.
38 Ibid., 15.
39 Ibid., 15.
underlying desire to present information in new ways is key to expanding the audience for historic sites across the country. Landscapes in particular, given the propensity of nature to change, alter or erase markers of the past, require creativity to move beyond a simple sign post and lookout point or a paper guide. As the “viewshed” of sites expands to include previously ignored groups, these lost landscape elements and moments in time may need to be recaptured using primary and secondary documents or archaeology. In some cases, this remaining two-dimensional knowledge may require some type of three-dimensional intervention to convey the type of experiential history missing from a typical visit. Another important component of the contributions made by Richard Rabinowitz and Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan is the importance of crafting the final result to match the needs and means of the site in question and the specific stories it has to tell. In interpretative planning, design and implementation, individuality of site and visitor is key. Even though the process of determining the most important narratives of a site and how to illustrate them can be replicated, the implemented projects are as site specific as each life lived in a particular place. Imagination and unconventional thinking are required to evoke past features, expanding and enhancing the experience of place and, as proposed by Enos Mills, increasing the number of people who feel compelled to steward the future of a place.
Chapter Two: Tactical Urbanism, A Means to Continue Change

“We have to do more with less—doing being the operative word.”
Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change*

The human tendency to alter buildings and landscapes over time often results in disjointed remains and the desired ‘period of interpretation’ lacks some or all of the necessary components relevant to a time period. The fragmented remnants of the past raise the question— to reconstruct or not to reconstruct? In *The Reconstructed Past*, this debate is aptly named the “Reconstructions Dilemma,” clearly showing the disconnect that exists even among highly experienced professionals. Barry Mackintosh’s essay in the same volume lays out the history of this debate in the National Park Service, a highly experienced agency which has approached the question of interpretation from a number of perspectives over the course of time.

Projects like the McLean House at Appomattox Court House, Colonial Williamsburg, Fort Caroline in Florida as well as numerous others have been deemed failures, semi-successes and others have been stopped before resources were expended, and all have pushed the debate around landing somewhere on the pro or anti-reconstruction spectrum. For the NPS, the reconstruction/restoration debate has hinged on the opinions of individual employees, funding, and the availability of data for a particular place, most

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41 Period of Interpretation is a concept that some individuals in the professional field today find complicated. Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan argue that historic sites should reduce dependence on this strict period of interpretation because it can reduce the scope of thinking to encompass only a small and narrow set of associations and historical themes. See *Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums*, 175-179. This thesis understands Period of Interpretation as an important set of benchmarks, understanding that built features of buildings or landscapes can be carried over multiple years and lifetimes and that strict adherence to a specific date range can cause problems. The layers tell the story.


often archeological data. In all cases the safeguarding of such resources especially given the fragile and irreplaceable nature of buried remains continues to be of paramount importance. Today the Standards of Reconstruction include qualifications like a requirement for evidence “to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture,” and that the need be “essential to the public understanding of the property.”45 Any work must be “preceded by a thorough archeological investigation” and if disturbances are unavoidable, mitigation must follow.46 Designs must be set apart as new and the recreation of designs proposed but not implemented are not acceptable.47 Accuracy is required above all else. This elevated standard set forth by the Secretary of Interior and the National Park Service for research, documentation, excavation, and accuracy requires a significant investment of time and resources, something most historic sites and non-profits are unable to expend.48 And yet, these sites may still require a high quality experience for visitor immersion in space that only the actual structure or a reconstruction can provide. So how does a site without capacity provide an accurate, enveloping experience that helps visitors connect spatially to lost realities and results in a holistic experience of knowing the authentic place? In contemplating a bridge between what has been lost and what is required to convey a complete story, one answer lies in a popular contemporary planning mechanism, tactical urbanism.

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 The National Park Service outlines specific Standards for Reconstruction, which are but a portion of the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These are both technical and design recommendations which Preservation professionals use to assist decision-making at national, state and local levels on individual properties and districts alike. More information can be found here: https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm.
The same methodology used today to create summer beer gardens, Park(ing) Day and temporary road closures for large-scale events, builds community and invigorates space with new and novel uses.⁴⁹ These methods of spatial activation have multiple definitions given by public agencies and private individuals. Merriam-Webster describes tactical urbanism as, “of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose,” and Mike Lydon et al describe it as, “decentralized, bottom-up, extraordinarily agile, networked, low-cost and low-tech,” and an, “approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions.”⁵⁰ The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, which serves the greater Philadelphia community, describes the pop-up economy as, “a temporary, nationwide trend,” which includes pop-up “shops, events and planning,” all sharing a common variable of reducing risk.”⁵¹

According to Lydon et al, the challenge for cities today is to create or invest in “big ticket items” requiring high capital, political and social investment, usually without a guarantee of success.⁵² The economic downturn and recession of the late 2000s put this type of risk taking out of reach for many cities and often proves an insurmountable hurdle or one elected community leaders are hesitant to attempt. Even with these fiscal constrictions, the cities and communities people live and work in require regular investment, maintenance and growth. The more an individual’s own economic situation fluctuates, the more that individual will rely on or look for potential benefits or free and reduced-cost enjoyable activities. These expectations have set up a number of scenarios in cities like Philadelphia,

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⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵² Ibid.
Detroit, New York and others, where citizens and communities are working to create new ways to invest in publicly shared amenities because the pooling of resources can produce larger and potentially more successful results than any one individual could achieve. Regardless of labeling, the desired end goal is the same – to improve the livability of a place at the building, block or street level, on a human-scale.\textsuperscript{53}

When these constrained financial circumstances are combined with typical planning processes during which citizens are asked to react to what appear to be finalized, large-scale proposals, people are not interested in continuing a cycle that feels disconnected from everyday life.\textsuperscript{54} Individuals are moving away from this heavily regulated and “fundamentally broken” process towards a reality where they can exercise more control over the micro-scale neighborhoods in which they interact every day.\textsuperscript{55} In cases where either the city or the citizen has instituted the project, there are specific regulations with which to comply, and so proving the efficacy of a solution or design through temporary and experimental means can be a productive way to win favor and investment before making a permanent change. This process of testing and evaluation is particularly important when considering application to historic sites because it pairs well with the preservation ethos of treading lightly and avoiding physical change. Because the original building, object, or landscape is held in the highest regard for its ability to convey information about the past, protecting the integrity of the item can require modern intervention. Most of, if not all of these resources are singular, unique for their connection to a person, movement or style and so it is a preservationist’s job to act in the interest of the built environment considering all of the risks and benefits

\textsuperscript{53} Lydon, et al, \textit{Tactical Urbanism}.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
before intervening, just as a city might for a proposed change to a particular public space or major thoroughfare.

An increasingly mobile population, shifting demographics, and the proliferation of ideas through social media and other internet sources have inspired more individuals and cities to try their hands at physical and social change using impermanent tactics. The rapid exchange of ideas, along with advice, interviews, even images of successful events have created a spectrum of projects, some sanctioned and others completely renegade. Regardless of the originator of this type of project or plan, the goals are usually similar. Individuals and city agencies seek to build “livable” communities, in which public spaces are accessible, engaging, hospitable, and imbued with a sociability that draws people who will invest time and energy into their upkeep and protection.56 Research and quantitative assessments of all types of placemaking indicate a number of benefits to these activities. These benefits include support of local economies, business investment, attraction to tourists, and other cultural opportunities, thereby reducing crime and increasing pedestrian safety as well as improving general health and the environment.57

For cities, tactical urbanism planning is ideal because the monetary investment is small, and the public can easily offer opinions and feedback. Good planning is about observing human behavior in space and meeting everyday needs. Even monitoring the

57 Ibid; Placemaking is a relatively new concept in planning and design and while there are numerous definitions most describe both a similar process and result. Mark A. Wyckoff of the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute defines placemaking as, “the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.” In addition, he goes on to break placemaking into four distinct categories, which strive to meet a more specific goal than simply improving quality of place. Standard Placemaking is most often associate with the Project for Public Spaces, http://www.pps.org, an organization which uses improvements to place as a way to produce incremental change over a long period of time. Strategic Placemaking has a particular goal and targeted process to entice workers to generate job creation and attract business. Creative Placemaking is specifically designed to institutionalize arts and culture in the built environment and sustain its impact on community. Tactical Placemaking is deliberate, phased planning to create short-term changes often with realistic budgets to develop public spaces through stakeholder input. Individual projects for each of these types can vary, more information can be found here: http://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/375/65824/4typesplacemaking_pzn_wyckoff_january2014.pdf.
tendencies of people who utilize public spaces can be diagnostic, as the basic difference
between regular use and general disinterest by the target audience can offer direction to
future investment. Once a proposed park or activity is engaged, planners’ observations can
define or refine potential problems allowing the final investment to be a more interesting
draw than perhaps originally conceived. These incremental steps can be built into larger
planning timelines and serve as an incubator of business, which sometimes persuade private
developers to invest alongside city agencies. Disconnects in the urban fabric, or at an
historic site, are often the result of change-over-time, and tactical urbanism is able to tread
lightly on the past to help rebuild these connections. Other factors contributing to the
success of tactical projects are grassroots support and contributions from citizens.
Individuals can use this type of thinking to demonstrate to neighbors and elected leaders the
types of investment they believe will foster community interaction, economic growth and
livability.

Mike Lydon, lead author of the *Tactical Urbanism Guidebook*, and the other principals
of the Street Plans Collaborative, stress that tactical planning is not a new phenomenon and
that small-scale interventions and incremental developments have already proved successful
as the product of organic development over centuries. The first volume on tactical urbanism
published online by the Collaborative was originally just a reaction to the trend the designers
saw in cities around them, particularly as the economy was poor. The second volume was
intended to keep the conversation going but also reacted to the increased diversity of

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
tactics. In *Volume 2*, the authors drew a clear line between ‘tactical urbanism’ and ‘placemaking.’ In an interview, Lydon specifically called out yarn-bombing as a method which creates an eye-catching “piece of public art” but noted that the final result does not generally offer the long-term, physical change a tactical project should. The aim should be to “do something larger,” not simply a one-off installation or unique commentary. The goal of the Street Plans Collective’s demonstration is to make a change and then determine how to replicate that change again either through temporary or more permanent means.  

Tactical is not a blasé label, it describes projects that employ strategy and planning to demonstrate a desired change, and uses a physical intervention to open dialog among citizens, city officials and/or non-profit organizations. A project, such as those implemented by the Better Block Foundation, “educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of health[y] and vibrant neighborhoods.” Pavement to Parks, an organization working in San Francisco creates public laboratories through design interventions that are easily reversible. Pavement to Parks offers installations that spur deep conversations about meaningful change. This intentionality is important for the application of tactical thinking to historic site interpretation, but instead of city and citizen, the physical intervention generates a dialog between the site staff and the visitors.

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64 Nate Berg, “The Official Guide to Tactical Urbanism.  
65 Ibid.  
67 Ibid.
For a project originated either by an organization or an individual, the important part of the process is letting the “experiment inform the design.” Learning from and reinvesting in successful interventions and modifying those which fail, is tantamount to utilizing tactical urbanism to bring about productive change. That such temporary measures are entertained with greater frequency demonstrates the complexity of design choices and the need to have confidence when high monetary investment is involved. These same factors, which affect communities large and small across the country, are similar to the dilemmas faced by historic sites, needing to stretch resources to care for buildings, property, staff and visitor experience. Because of these situational similarities, tactical urbanism is an intriguing method for resolving some of these problems at historic sites.

While theoretical discussion is important to understanding tactical planning, case studies from cities in the United States usefully illustrate the effects of applying tactical philosophies to physical places. These projects offer an understanding of the various scales at which installations or alterations can be attempted and, or effective. In Philadelphia, numerous projects, using the tactical methods outlined in multiple publications discussing tactical urbanism, serve as examples of response and redesign in a constant process that improves outcomes.

**Eakins Oval, Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia**

**Activation of Public Green Space**

Named for Philadelphia’s world-famous, realist painter, Thomas Eakins, the Eakins Oval is an eight-acre public space intended, and programmed today, for the use and

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enjoyment of all Philadelphians. Ringed by the intersections of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Kelly Drive and Spring Garden Street, among others, this traffic circle is below the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and near the new Barnes Foundation and The Franklin Institute. Though the cultural institutions near the Oval are enticing, the significant and regular flow of traffic at its edge prevents people from accessing The Oval. In an effort to make this inaccessible park more family-friendly and accessible, the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation implemented some temporary changes to activate the Oval (fig. 1).

In 2013, the transformation was a pop-up park called “Beach, Blanket and Boardwalk.” As the name implies, this alteration included a substantial delivery of sand, enough to create a Philadelphia version of the Jersey Shore’s Boardwalk (figs. 2, 3). Located near the Philadelphia Museum of Art, “The Oval” was closed to traffic and the installation of sand, a boardwalk, lifeguard chairs and oversized versions of favorite family games like chess and checkers (figs. 4, 5). This “mock beach” was open for regular enjoyment of residents and visitors and was boosted with free programming based on thematic days: Wellness Tuesdays, Arts and Culture Wednesdays, Environment Thursdays, and Food and Flicks Fridays. Free public events included yoga and other fitness classes, food trucks, art classes or projects and movie nights (fig. 6). The event ran from July 17 to August 18,

70 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
2013 and cost $180,000, most of which was funded through non-profit donations, including substantial support from the William Penn Foundation.74

This type of project, the activation of a desired but underutilized amenity, is typical of tactical urbanism or pop-up projects. The temporary nature of the month-long installation, events, and the low-cost, relative to the potential expense of operating the same type of programming year-round, fit the model of tactical urbanism. In a 2013 interview, Marc Wilken, Concessions Manager for the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, spoke prior to the opening of The Oval. He explained that B, B & B was an initial phase of activation for the park.75 Hopefully there would eventually be a year-round series of events, at least spanning spring, summer and fall.76 The City hoped the activation would inspire people to take ownership of and feel invested in the park, to use it on a regular basis, event or no. If this was the goal, it does not appear that regular and long-term changes have been made but the regular, summer use and activation are recurring. Though the length of the event was short, the timing of that month, during the summer when students are out of school, the days are longer, and the weather is ideal for outdoor use, meant that the programs were more likely to be attended and the space used. Even without specific figures on attendance or daily visitation, the repetition of this Oval activation each summer since 2013, including plans for 2016, demonstrates attainment of a certain success.77 Beyond the summers, The Oval played host to Pope Francis during his 2015 Festival of Families visit and is also the location of other fundraising events for area institutions. Additionally, The

74 Muse, “Philly Gets a Beach on Eakins Oval,” NBC 10 Philadelphia.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
Oval played host to Future Sensations, an art installation by Saint-Gobain installed in only four cities around the world.\textsuperscript{78} Philadelphia was the only U.S. host. The five 13-32 foot pavilions were open to visitors for free during their stay in the City.\textsuperscript{79} The selection of this location for such an important installation shows that even if the Eakins Oval is never fully activated to the level described in the 2013 Wilken interview, the temporary, pop-up summer installations have demonstrated that the space is conducive to large gatherings and important cultural events.

**Spruce Street Harbor Park, Philadelphia, PA**  
**Creation of a Park on an Underutilized Waterfront**

Also in Philadelphia, Spruce Street Harbor Park is a popular and heavily-used, seasonal transformation on the banks of the Delaware River (fig. 7). Created as a free and open-to-the-public space in 2014 by the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation and through the sponsorship of Univest Corporation and Valley Green Bank, the park has returned for two additional summers, including plans for an extended run in 2016.\textsuperscript{80} Like the Eakins Oval, Spruce Street Harbor Park is intended to energize the space around Penn’s Landing during the summer, activating the edge of the River, an important resource which requires crossing a major road to access it. Also like The Oval, the Harbor Park is located

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Saint-Gobain is one of the world’s largest building material companies, founded in 1665. The company has provided materials for the Louvre’s Glass Pyramid, Versailles’s Hall of Mirrors and even the Mars Rover. The exhibition, celebrating the company’s 350th Anniversary explored science, art and storytelling through five large pavilions, which were built and enhanced with 21st century technology. For more information, access the company’s anniversary website: https://www.saint-gobain.com/en/350-years.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
near a number of historic ships and the Seaport Museum, cultural institutions to which the City would like to draw people, reconnecting individuals to the Delaware River.

The Park includes a large installation of hammocks and chairs to provide comfortable spaces for lounging or socializing (fig. 8). In addition, food trucks, a floating restaurant, as well as wine, summer cocktails and beer, including a Yards Brewing Company Lazy Hammock IPA, render the space a place where individuals can come and spend more than a few hours. The RiverRink Summerfest, an outdoor roller rink, was so popular that it was transformed into a winter ice skating rink. The park has made an impact on more than just the City of Philadelphia, The Huffington Post named it one of the best urban beaches in the world, and Travel + Leisure said Spruce Street Harbor Park is one of the coolest floating restaurants in the world.

The same type of large scale games and family activities that drew people to The Oval have been at least as effective, if not more so, at Penn’s Landing. Even simple additions like an oversized red Adirondack chair painted with #visitphilly, sets the site apart from other distinguishable places in Philadelphia and makes it a destination for people (fig. 9). According to the Visit Philadelphia website, the Spruce Street Harbor Park hosted more than 750,000 visitors in 2015, certainly due to the lounging space combined with an urban garden and the magic produced by hundreds of LED lights. Also like The Oval, the Harbor Park is accessible by public transportation, bike or on foot, making it the type of

82 “Your Essential Guide to Spruce Street Harbor Park and RiverRink Summerfest, Opening Memorial Day Weekend at Penn’s Landing.”
83 “Spruce Street Harbor Park.”
84 “Your Essential Guide to Spruce Street Harbor Park.”
85 Ibid.
86 “Spruce Street Harbor Park.”
amenity the City of Philadelphia hopes all people, regardless of home address, feel compelled to use and use often. 87

Both the Eakins Oval and the Spruce Street Harbor Park are important examples of tactical urbanism because they illustrate responsiveness to the tactical portion of the label. These two parks have been repeatedly installed in the same place, but each and every time, there is response to the reactions of individuals or groups. Both the expansion of the projects to include uses in other seasons or for a longer period of time than the year before, show that the organizers are listening and responding to the aspects of the interventions people enjoy most. In the case of Spruce Street, the weather is one contributor. A cold, winter day on the blustery shore of the Delaware River is not likely to draw a substantial crowd, but the organizers have been able to continue to entice people during the warmer months and have established that section of Philadelphia’s waterfront as a highly anticipated event venue, just as the tactical plan hoped it would.

PARK(ing) Day, Worldwide
A Day to Change Community, In the Space of One Parking Spot

At a macro scale, an event like Park(ing) Day has worldwide implementation possibilities. According to the website, this is an “annual, worldwide event where artists, activists, and citizens independently (but simultaneously) turn metered parking spots into ‘PARK(ing)’ spaces.” 88 Rebar, a San Francisco art and design studio interested in calling out a need for open urban space started this day, now held on the third Friday in September, in

87 “Spruce Street Harbor Park.”
2005. They intended to spur debates about the allocation and creation of space using the expiration of a parking meter as a metaphor for the importance of participating in this conversation sooner rather than later.99

The original installation lasted a total of two hours, the maximum time stated on the meter, and has since produced numerous other projects.90 The small parameters of a parking space have helped to tackle political and social issues including the environment, labor rights, marriage equality and health care.91 Regardless of their views, organizations and individuals have staged protests, ecology and urban farming demonstrations, offered free bike repair, and opened free health clinics, as well as curated art installations and public celebrations, including a wedding ceremony (figs. 10-17).92 The importance of a project like PARK(ing) Day is that it is a neutral tool, it can be adapted to empower people who fall anywhere on social and political spectrums and can assist groups in giving a voice to a view or position, even if temporarily.93

Rebar’s original project, and the photograph published after, drew other people to the project, producing a number of replication requests. Instead of attempting to meet these needs through consulting or design work, Rebar’s solution was to produce promotional and instructional materials to aid others in their own community building endeavors. This “open-source” kit model, not unlike the freely accessible software with the same name, expanded the impact of what could have been a one-time-only art installation.94 In fact, the

89 “About PARK(ing) Day.”
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
only permission a person or group would require is to consent to a licensing agreement to use the name “PARK(ing) Day,” and then a wealth of information and advertising is there to be used (fig. 18). The Frequently Asked Questions section outlines the types of questions a person may have before beginning a project including legalities like permits or ordinances related to types of activities permitted in designated parking spaces. As the originators, Rebar has the benefit of knowledge of many past projects, successful and not, and that insight is now available on the web to everyone. Most importantly, there is voluminous advice for working within the limitations of city laws, so those who have limited options need not feel disconnected from the empowerment this planning can offer.

Rebar maintains its principles that birthed the first PARK(ing) Day in 2005. They support citizens making a participatory statement about the changes they wish to see in their community, and those same Rebar inventors are happy to explain the thoughts behind the project. By discouraging commercialization or business promotion and encouraging people to embrace the ideals of PARK(ing) even if they cannot recreate it in a literal parking spot, the PARK(ing) Day website’s proclamation that you can “Reclaim your City!” is proven true. People have transformed their communities, blocks and even favorite coffee shops or restaurants through regular or seasonal installations small enough to fit in a parking spot.

The temporary nature of these PARK(ing) Day projects and the parameters imposed on individuals or groups by the size and limitations of a single parking space demonstrate the creativity this type of thinking can inspire. By imposing similar analogous restrictions on an

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96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
interpretive project at a historic site, relating to money or specific time limits or space, the
solutions could expand to include options not considered feasible long-term. The tested
installations could prove the efficacy of something originally written off in its permanent
form, or something present for two hours could present an unexpected resolution for the
site and visitors alike.

In addition to these explicit, tactical urbanism projects, contemporary art
installations, theatrical performances, and concerts, especially those which have been placed
at historic sites, are worthy of consideration. As promoted by *The Anarchists Guide*, and
employed with increasing frequency, the use of contemporary art installations at historic sites
is increasing as a way to build audiences. More often than not, these installations are
temporary and singular, in place for only a short time and never repeated. While these
projects are certainly compelling and impactful, often finding a new audience, they do not
necessarily address one particular benefit offered by tactical urbanism – flexibility and the
ability to adjust in a physically impactful way. A commissioned artist typically creates a piece
or installation for both the client and themselves, which by its nature produces a different
sort of communication than site-determined messages. The artist works in tandem with the
site to determine what can be done at a place, what the site hopes to achieve, and what the
artist would like to communicate through their work. What artists often offer is a new
perspective on past interventions, which speak directly to the history or importance of a site
and enhance or highlight those narratives.

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Nightscape, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA
High Tech Light and Sound Exhibition

Longwood Gardens outside Philadelphia was originally home to the Lenni Lenape tribe, served as a multi-generational Quaker farmstead, arboretum and park and finally the land was purchased by Pierre S. du Pont in 1870. In 1906, du Pont began construction on his first garden, the Flower Garden Walk, building on the previous Pierce family development, and later added a conservancy, and a water garden complete with blue-tiled pools. He grew the property from two hundred and two to nine hundred and twenty six acres. After Pierre du Pont’s death, the estate transferred to public ownership as a non-profit. Today it has a staff of thirteen hundred and an annual budget above $50 million.

The Klip Collective installed an evening light display and visitor experience, ultimately called Nightscape in the original Flower Garden Walk (figs. 19-21). The Klip Collective is a Philadelphia-based “art shop,” which specializes in “projection lighting and technology with storytelling,” for clients that include institutions, corporations and cultural organizations. Their Longwood Gardens creation fostered a dialog between the arboretum both as the gardens are experienced today and in reference to the innovative additions from du Pont’s heyday. The Italian Water Garden, inspired by similar designs du Pont saw in Italy, featured state of the art hydraulic infrastructure that supported the intricate display of water, color and light on the surface (figs. 22-24).

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
Creative Director for the Klip Collective, explained in a blog post that the project used the gardens and the landscape as the canvas, the major source of information and inspiration for the project.\textsuperscript{107} By design, Nightscape is intended to challenge the certainties and absolutes which inform the everyday life of a visitor, by creating a “dream world” far different than the daytime experience of Longwood (figs. 25-28).\textsuperscript{108} Rivera wrote, “we are interpreting the space through movement, color, light, and sound. As a site-specific work, it was built through testing, trial-and-error, and capturing the beautiful ‘accidents.’ The process became visceral, following our gut reactions and building on the moments that felt right.”\textsuperscript{109} Using garden-specific sounds and specially composed music, the experience transformed the garden from familiar to an unexpected dream world.\textsuperscript{110}

For Longwood Garden the use of light and color to enhance the estate is not out of the ordinary. It is an additional, temporary layer coordinated on a larger scale. The permanent performance installation in the Italian Water Garden and the history of both light and color in du Pont’s original design relate well to the Nightscape installation.\textsuperscript{111} Given the nature of the work the Klip Collective does, working with a number of light and sound installations, both the site and the artist were able to complete a substantial transformation by electing to have visitors attend the event at night. In “turning off the lights” the plant forms and garden layouts became more about the overarching shapes, and allowed the application of colored light to add new, fine-grain details into the composition. By flipping the typical experience on its head, Nightscape connects individuals to parts or structures of

\textsuperscript{107} “Envisioning Nightscape,” \textit{Longwood Gardens.}
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Randall, “Fountain Technology in the Jazz Age,” \textit{Longwood Gardens.}
the garden they may not have previously seen, or perhaps helps them see the things they find familiar in a completely different capacity. Integral to the Nightscape experience is travel through the garden, a journey started by the Klip Collective but ultimately guided by the desires of the participant.\footnote{Heather Coletti, “Nightscape: Designing an Experience,” Longwood Gardens, 16 August 2015, http://longwoodgardens.org/blog/2015-08-16/0000000/nightscape-designing-experience.} The choices made by the designer, which create both structure and flexibility, allow each visitor to bring his or her own perspective facilitating an experience uniquely their own.

The Nightscapes installation draws inspiration from Longwood Garden’s history but with a layer of the artist’s own interpretation. The event-factor drew people in, who may or may not be regular visitors, and it asks those who know the garden to re-consider a familiar place. Important for this thesis is the idea that a simple but radical intervention to a place, in this case visiting at night, instantly brought new perspective to the garden. Introducing the play of light and music also enhanced historic features of the gardens that individuals might not connect to on their own.

“The Gates,” Central Park, New York City, NY
Fabric and Steel Installation for Temporary Transformation

Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and Jeanne-Claude Denat installed 7,503 gates in Central Park on February 12, 2005 (fig. 29).\footnote{Christo and Jeanne-Claude, The Gates Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005, 22 November 2004, http://christojeanneclaude.net/__data/thegates_kit.pdf.} Constructed of steel poles, sixteen feet tall with varying widths, covered with a saffron-orange colored fabric hanging from the top bar of each gate and ending about seven feet above the ground, the gates required an installation crew of six hundred workers (figs. 30-32).\footnote{Ibid.} In addition to the labor required for
installation, three hundred uniformed workers monitored the project and answered
questions.\textsuperscript{115} The vibrant color of the orange cloth against leafless trees offered visual drama
to New York City for the duration of “The Gates” time on view (fig. 33). Each gate,
manufactured off site, was self-contained, meaning there were no holes required to keep
them in place.\textsuperscript{116}

According to information published by the artists about the project, the couple
envisioned an exterior installation in New York City long before they were able to bring it to
fruition. Central Park was a key part of their son’s childhood, and the final 2005 iteration of
“The Gates” had evolved from a 1979 proposal as well as a subsequent 1981 rejected
version (figs. 34, 35).\textsuperscript{117} The realized twenty three miles of walkways and 7,503 gates
responded to the serpentine nature of the Central Park plan and related both to the
topography of the park, in contrast to the order of the city grid, and the human scale of
visitors to the park.\textsuperscript{118}

Another key part of “The Gates” was the temporary nature of the installation,
something Christo and Jeanne-Claude believed necessary for the success and ultimate value
of all of their work.\textsuperscript{119} Their reasoning was that the fleeting nature of each project lends a
sense of urgency to see the piece in addition to the “love and tenderness brought by the fact
that they will not last.”\textsuperscript{120} They make the distinct connection between the temporary nature
of other beloved parts of life like childhood or even life itself.\textsuperscript{121} What the pair created was

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] Christo and Jeanne-Claude, \textit{The Gates Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005}.
\item[116] Ibid.
\item[117] Ibid.
\item[118] Ibid.
\item[119] Ibid.
\item[120] Ibid.
\item[121] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
so short in time on view but quite heavy in visual weight that it was discussed, critiqued, celebrated, and most importantly, remembered long after it was removed. 122 While many in the art world responded to it with mixed reviews, for many it imbued the park and New York City with a joy it had not seen since before September 11, 2001. 123

As a public art, “The Gates” offers ideas to consider when applying a tactical urbanism methodology to an historic site. The installation responded to the historic park design of Olmstead and Vaux (1858) and created both visual impact through color and physical alteration through a significant intrusion of foreign material. By understanding the structure of the Park before “The Gates” were installed, experiencing the gates during February of 2005, and finally remembering the impact in the same space following the removal, Christo and Jeanne-Claude altered the meaning of Central Park for all future users. If an historic site could capture the same impact and radical transformation these two artists imparted on an enormous site like Central Park, it could bring about new conversations or perspectives from interested stakeholders.

So, a hybrid of the two, something responding to the history of a place with the temporary and flexible nature of a typical “pop-up” project allows a site to consider and evaluate its history in new ways. The clear and sudden impact of projects like The Gates or PARK(ing) Day matched with the responsive nature of The Oval or Spruce Street Harbor Park can expand or draw out new narratives and reach new audiences while deepening connections with current ones.

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123 Ibid, 35.
The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, Philadelphia, PA
Artist in Residence at a Historic Site

The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation recently hosted its first artist-in-residence in 2014 (fig. 36). Martha McDonald, produced a live performance and art installation dealing with both the cemetery and Victorian mourning while highlighting plants favored and made famous by William Hamilton’s collection.124 The Lost Garden featured McDonald leading a group through the cemetery while she sang traditional Victorian songs of mourning (figs. 37, 38). The tour ultimately led to the mansion where the installation of hand-knitted flower specimens complimented the exterior experience and called to mind the many botanical contributions William Hamilton made during his lifetime (figs. 39, 40).125 These individual flowers were stored under domes in niches, and an elaborate dress skirt cover was crafted by the artist as a final addition to her performance (figs. 41, 42).126 The Lost Garden (2014) was on view for two weeks included six performances, and an artist’s talk.127 Based on McDonald’s statement, she intended to commemorate the garden or landscape of plants that Hamilton created with his greenhouse as well as the celebration of women’s crafts during the Victorian era, particularly wax flowers and hair jewelry.128 While the installation and performance brought people to the site, it was clearly intended to build on pre-existing knowledge as opposed to clearly laying out the history of the site for visitors. Certainly, an individual could do their own research before attending a performance, but without proper situation in the historical themes, a visitor could leave the experience with

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
more questions. And so, while this type of project may draw new or existing visitors to a site, it does not necessarily expand or advance the interpretive narratives and mission of The Woodlands. It is an artistic interpretation of and inspired by the site’s history, not an explicitly preservation focused one. In addition, audience reactions will inform future artist projects at the site.

As a case for future projects, The Lost Garden demonstrates the possibilities and past success using the landscape and the mansion together. This is particularly important when considering the site in a historical context, because Hamilton invested a significant amount of time and attention in connecting the interior spaces of his mansion with his finely crafted exterior. Views to the Schuylkill River edge and out towards the area now called Centre Circle were just as influential as the chosen paint color, floor finish or interior furnishing. The Lost Garden project presented two distinct narratives, that of William Hamilton’s interest in and contributions to botany, and the role of flowers in commemoration and mourning during the Cemetery Era, were joined in a single artistic installation and performance.

Though easily combined by McDonald for The Lost Garden, it should be noted that the Hamilton era and the Cemetery era are not necessarily as fluid as the final performance and installation may suggest. The next chapter in this thesis will explore the larger history of Hamilton’s ownership of the site. The final design for The Woodlands Cemetery, beginning in the 1840s, is congruent with some of the features of Hamilton’s landscape. The highest point for Hamilton, Ice House Hill, became the most desired burial location for its elevation.

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129 “The Lost Garden,” Martha L. McDonald.
and the mansion and outbuildings were adapted to accommodate cemetery uses.\textsuperscript{130} This project clearly drew from the broader historical themes of The Woodlands but as a contemporary art experience McDonald was selective about her interpretation, at points blurring the lines to make more direct correlations between Hamilton’s botanical choices and the Cemetery’s development than historic documentations suggest. Even with these discontinuities, the project is still a quintessential example of an artist working with a place to develop their own individual work.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130} Master Plan Committee and Design Team for The Woodlands, Submitted by Mark B. Thompson Associates LLC, Architecture and Planning, \textit{Woodlands Connects}, April 2015, 4-8.

\textsuperscript{131} Author Elizabeth Gilbert is another creative professional who has used The Woodlands and the history of William Hamilton as inspiration for a project. \textit{The Signature of All Things}, published in 2013, is a fictional story using The Woodlands as a backdrop.
Figure 1. Eakins Oval Overhead View, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.theovalphl.org/
Figure 2. Eakins Oval at Night, PMA in the Background, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.visitphilly.com/events/philadelphia/the-oval-on-the-benjamin-franklin-parkway/#sm.00000tg9sj9vusem2pk56t68o0o91

Figure 3. Eakins Oval, View of the Oversized Games, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.visitphilly.com/events/philadelphia/the-oval-on-the-benjamin-franklin-parkway/#sm.00000tg9sj9vusem2pk56t68o0o91
Figure 4. Detail of The Oval’s Large Connect Four Games, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.theovalphl.org/

Figure 5. Visitors to The Oval, PMA in the Background, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.theovalphl.org/
Figure 6. Children Enjoying The Oval, 2014
Photo Source: http://www.theovalphl.org/
Figure 7. View and Logo of Spruce Street Harbor Park, 2015

Figure 8. Spruce Street Harbor Park’s Temporary Seating with Boats Behind, 2014
Figure 9. #visitphilly Chair at Spruce Street Harbor Park, 2014

Photo Source: https://barefootphiladelphia.com/2014/08/30/like-a-tourist-watching-the-city-wake-up/
Figure 10. Parking Day Park by Alite Designs, Curiosity Shoppe, & CCA, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/

Figure 11. Park(ing) Day NYC, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/
Figure 12. Del Popolo Shipping Container Pizza Truck, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/

Figure 13. Parking Day Park by Alite Designs, Curiosity Shoppe, & CCA, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/
Figure 14. Bocce Ball Parking Day Park by SWA Group & Bentley Reserve, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/

Figure 15. Soft Publics Parking Day Park by de LaB & The Rare Studio, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/
Figure 16. San Francisco Friends School Parking Day Park, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/

Figure 17. Interstice Architects Lighter than Air Parking Day Park, PARK(ing) Day Installation, 2012
Photo Source: http://inhabitat.com/parking-day-2012-pop-up-parks-spring-up-in-parking-spots-across-the-states/denver-parking-day-park-2012/
Figure 18. PARK(ing) Day Collector Poster, Rebar, 2009
Photo Source: http://parkingday.org/posters/
Figure 19. Flower Garden Walk, Spring, Longwood Gardens
Photo Source: http://longwoodgardens.org/gardens/flower-garden-walk
Figure 20. Flower Garden Walk, Fall, Longwood Gardens
Photo Source: http://longwoodgardens.org/gardens/flower-garden-walk
Figure 22. Italian Water Gardens, Longwood Gardens, 2015,
Figure 23. Italian Water Gardens, Summer, Longwood Gardens
Photo Source: http://longwoodgardens.org/gardens/italian-water-garden
Figure 24. Italian Water Gardens, Fall, Longwood Gardens
Photo Source: http://longwoodgardens.org/gardens/italian-water-garden
Figure 25. Fern House at Longwood Garden, Nightscape, 2015
Photo Source: http://technical.ly/philly/2015/07/02/longwood-gardens-nightscape-klip-collective/

Figure 26. Longwood Garden, Nightscape, 2015
Photo Source: http://longwoodgardens.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/174170_Nightscape_Topiaries_Davis_Harold_Hank_Longwood_Volunteer_Photographer_2.jpg
Figure 27. Overall View of the Garden, Longwood Garden, Nightscape, 2015
Photo Source: http://technical.ly/philly/2015/07/02/longwood-gardens-nightscape-klip-collective/

Figure 28. Detail of the Installation, Longwood Garden, Nightscape, 2015
Photo Source: http://taniagail.com/nightscape-at-longwood-gardens/
Figure 29. Overhead View of Central Park with the Installation, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationfordclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html
Figure 30. View Through the Gates in Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html

Figure 31. Perspectival Rendering of the Installation in Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html
Figure 32. Perspectival Rendering and Plan of the Installation in Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html

Figure 33. View of the Gates in a wintery Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html
Figure 34. Perspectival Rendering and Plan of the Installation in Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html
Figure 35. Perspectival Rendering and Plan of the Installation in Central Park, “The Gates,” 2012
Photo Source: http://presentationforclass.blogspot.com/2012/04/cristo-jeanne-claude.html
The Lost Garden

Figure 36. Advertisement for The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://woodlandspilia.org/thelostgarden/
Figure 37. Photo from the Exterior Portion of the Performance, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html

Figure 38. Photo from the Exterior Portion of the Performance, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html
Figure 39. Interior Floral Installation with the Artist, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html

Figure 40. Photo from the Interior Portion of the Performance, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html
Figure 41. One of the Handmade Specimens Under Glass, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014,
Photo Source: http://marshalmcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html
Figure 42. Performance Dress in the Saloon, The Lost Garden, The Woodlands, 2014
Photo Source: http://marthamcdonald.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-lost-garden.html
Chapter Three: The Woodlands, A Philadelphia Site

“...interested only in his house, his hothouse and his Madeira.”
Visitor to Hamilton’s Estate, referenced in Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797-1799, 1805 with Some Further Account of Life in New Jersey

After determining Tactical Urbanism a viable means to communicate information about a historic house or site, the logical next step is to apply and test this concept. The application of tactical urbanism to a real historic site will allow evaluation of real world conditions, complications, and limitations offered by an actual place, enriching its already existing narratives and spaces. The Woodlands and its managing organization, The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation, in West Philadelphia present a site which is ideal for an experiment related to the potential benefits and implications of this “pop-up” methodology.

William Hamilton (1745-1813) was born in Philadelphia to a prominent family of politicians and lawyers (fig. 43). He lost his father at a very young age, and in 1766, at the age of 21, he inherited more than 300 acres of land west of the Schuylkill River. Amid the chaos of the American Revolution, Hamilton traveled to England to explore grand country estates. As a result of his travels, Hamilton began a massive overhaul of the original 1770 dwelling on his property when he returned to the United States in 1786. Most scholars believe the presently existing mansion, completed in 1789, subsumed the previous building

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132 For the purposes of this thesis, tactical urbanism is a physical and experiential process producing low-cost, agile designs to organize space. Solutions resulting from this method will have the flexibility to accommodate community input and react accordingly.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
Surrounding his substantial home, Hamilton envisioned a genteel landscape with the cultivations of natural beauty he had seen in England (figs. 45, 46). Another prominent anglophile, Thomas Jefferson, convinced of Hamilton’s success, described The Woodlands as, “the only rival which I have known in America to what may be seen in England.” This high compliment certainly would have made Hamilton very proud, particularly coming from a man whose ferme ornée and ultimate creation, Monticello, is still visited and studied by so many. The actual friendship or at least shared mutual respect between Hamilton and Jefferson is important considering the numerous comparisons relating the development of Hamilton’s estate to Jefferson’s.

Hamilton’s mansion and surrounding landscape functioned not only as a place to eat, sleep and entertain guests, but also as a stage set, meticulously designed to reveal only the portions or viewsheds Hamilton wanted to be seen and to obscure everything else. The idea of a building, specifically a house, acting as a machine to support the private and public functions of an individual’s life occurred at both the vernacular and elite level. The house, according to Dell Upton, was so common and familiar that it essentially became a background against which individuals and/or their architects expressed individual ideas, desires or needs. Upton argues that instead of thinking of the home as an atom, a single entity, the function is far more like a “molecule,” each with a distinct composition of individual atoms, charges and configurations to produce a specific type of molecule. Considering this comparison, the house mirrors the molecule in the sense that it is made

137 Jacobs, “Addendum to The Woodlands,” 2.
139 Ibid., 1.
141 Ibid., 24-25.
142 Ibid., 24-25.
unique by a distinct combination and interaction of parts, where some individuals have more control over the final creation, some exert more effort in the realization of the final design and each individual feels and experiences the place differently.\textsuperscript{143} Even the most simple floor plan or smallest house is affected by these unequal relationships and the increased scale usually added additional layers or more “individual atoms,” which have left behind more narratives to tell the more nuanced story.\textsuperscript{144} As much as a man like Hamilton or Jefferson wanted to own and control every aspect of his life, Upton would argue such a desire was a folly, an impossibility.\textsuperscript{145} And yet, William Hamilton strove to craft a mansion and landscape which suited his needs, interests and those of his family and social status.

Operated as a not-for-profit, The Woodlands has a long history in West Philadelphia and offers opportunities to explore the built heritage of an early American gentleman, his house, garden, service buildings, staff, and family. The Historic American Landscape Survey report describes the site as a cemetery occupying the, “grounds of an estate recognized throughout post-Revolutionary America as a leading example of English taste in architecture and gardening.”\textsuperscript{146} And while the originator of this vision, William Hamilton, did eventually achieve such a feat, it took years to craft his landscape.

Unfortunately, Hamilton’s complete vision was somewhat obscured in the 1840s. Following his death in 1813, Hamilton’s niece and nephew found the property increasingly problematic and expensive to maintain. To create a more manageable estate, they sold off parcels, which today hold the buildings of the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel

\textsuperscript{143} Upton, \textit{Architecture in the United States}, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 24-25.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 24-25.
\textsuperscript{146} Aaron V. Wunsch, “Woodlands Cemetery,” Historic American Landscape Survey No. PA-2, after 2000, 1.
University, leaving a small amount of land surrounding the mansion under Hamilton family control. In the 1840s, Eli K. Price and his partners purchased the remaining acreage to create The Woodlands Cemetery. With a parallel vision to Hamilton’s, Price saw himself as a protector of the important estate, considering his work a form of “stewardship,” protecting a hallowed and unique place, an early effort at historic preservation. Though he was interested in safeguarding against the wholesale loss of the property, he was comfortable making modifications which if they still existed would allow him to generate income. The transformation from individual estate to cemetery destroyed key aspects of Hamilton’s original landscape. The creation of a rural cemetery in the 1840s necessitated the demolition or modification of a number of components which today would explain and clarify the ways William Hamilton, his family and his servants used the physical landscape and the house as communicating spatial units. These losses have proven problematic as interpretation of the landscape has become a desired facet of a visitor’s experience of The Woodlands. Fortunately for the site’s staff and its visitors, Dr. Charles Drayton accompanied his son to his first day of medical school.

While this may seem an odd triumph, Drayton’s son attended the University of Pennsylvania. In early November, 1806, Drayton toured William Hamilton’s estate before he returned to his own property in South Carolina. Because of the meticulous details written and sketched in his journal, Drayton clarified some of the now obscured details of Hamilton’s estate. In addition to notes about the hothouse and greenhouses, which were a source of great pride for the owner, Drayton noted the path system which connected the

mansion to the other service buildings, the large kitchen garden, and orchard. The following passages from his journal explain in detail what Drayton saw:

The Stable Yard, tho [sic] contiguous to the house, is perfectly concealed from it, the Lawn, & the Garden. The mode of concealment from the 2 latter, has been mentioned un-der [sic] article Fence. It re-mains [sic] to describe the former. At + [or contiguous to] the side of the side of the house near the front angle is a piece of {illegible} masonry ++ [which extends out equal to the bow-window, & joins it – its cover is flat – it covers or screens the entrance to Cellar] (about 7 or 8 ft square), & is as high as the base of the principle floor bow windows. from the cellar one enters under the bow window & into this Screen which is about 6 or 7 feet Square through these we enter a narrow area, & ascend some some few Steps + [close to the side of the house] into the garden - & thro [sic] the other opening we ascend a paved winding slop, which spreads, as it ascends, into the yard. This sloping pass-age [sic] being a segment of a circle, & its two outer walls concealed by (a) loose hedges. & by thes [sic] projecti(--)on [sic] of the flat roofed Screen of masonry, keeps the yard, & I believe the whole passage out of sight from the house – but certainly from the gar-den [sic] & park lawn.

The Approach. its road, woods, lawn & clumps, are laid out with much taste & ingenuity. Also the loca-tion [sic] of the Stables; with a Yard between the house, stables, lawns or approach or park, & the plea- -sure [sic] ground or garden. The Fences separating the Park-lawn from the Garden on one hand, & the office yard on the other, are 4 ft 6 high. The former are made with posts & lathes – the latter with posts, rails & boards. They are concealed with evergreens hedge – of juniper I think.149 (fig. 47)

Based on Drayton’s copious notes, it is clear he had access other visitors did not, perhaps because of his interest in buildings, estates, and his social connections. These accounts and the accompanying sketch help to build a picture of how the mansion and the surrounding landscape operated (fig. 47).

This “landscape of domestic service” facilitated Hamilton’s mansion’s function as a well-oiled machine, hiding most of the important service work behind a heavy screen of

149 Dr. Charles Drayton Diary (photocopied transcription), 2 November 1806, Drayton Hall, National Trust for Historic Preservation.
fence and vegetation.\textsuperscript{150} The sunken, service corridor “connecting the mansion to the principal outdoor work area near the stable” followed a pattern of design present in contemporary estates in both England and the United States.\textsuperscript{151} In British parlance, this space was known as “rustic” and included the spaces where servants both worked and lived their own lives, including eating meals and socializing.\textsuperscript{152} In the case of The Woodlands, this space was accessed by an exterior, subterranean path known as the “Cryptoporticus (fig. 48).”\textsuperscript{153} Not only is this feature important to the way the house functioned in the past, but it was also recently stabilized, making future visitor access a likely possibility.\textsuperscript{154} This rehabilitation has also opened interpretive avenues for the entirety of the path described by Drayton, particularly since it was filled and obscured by new plantings during the Cemetery Era of the property (figs. 49, 50, 51).

In addition to the layered and complex history of the site, as a non-profit organization, The Woodlands Trust operates in a typical manner for historic sites today. The staff is small, with a full-time Executive Director and Program Coordinator and one part-time Event Rental Coordinator.\textsuperscript{155} The staff relies heavily on relationships with institutions like the University of Pennsylvania and other Philadelphia area universities for a steady supply of students interested in research and internships as well as support from neighbors and those interested in cemeteries, gardens or other parts of the site’s narrative.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{150} Dr. Charles Drayton Diary, 2 November 1806.
\textsuperscript{151} Wunsch, “Woodlands Cemetery,” HALS No. PA-2, 35.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{155} “Staff and Board of Directors,” The Woodlands, Last modified 2014, http://woodlandsphila.org/staff-board.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
The strength of the Board of Directors also offers important professional expertise related not only to history but also building and maintenance issues.

Along with the contributions of all of these individuals, the Executive Director was able to raise grant money in the last few years for a master planning process. *Woodlands Connects* was released in April of 2015 and articulates the future direction for the next three to five years, laying out a number of focus areas including “engaging neighbors and building a vibrant community-based institution with a significant story about Philadelphia’s history.” While all of the information plays a role in preparation, one important piece for interpretive planning is a section called Current Use & Context – Existing Users. Based on a user survey, distributed between April 11th and June 2nd of 2014 through social media, mass mailing and in-person delivery, the information laid out in this section of the report is derived from the two hundred and eighty responses received. The majority of the users at The Woodlands come from the University Southwest District where most either live or work. With a population of almost eighty-two thousand, this community includes a number of “institutional, educational and medical” entities, and the majority of this population is from one-quarter to one-half miles away, about a five to fifteen minute walk. For interpretation to be successful, it must be based in part on knowledge of who the audience is and why they might be motivated to visit or attend events. Understanding when the largest number of people may be around to see an installation or weighing the length or

157 *Woodlands Connects*, 2.
type of travel against the time of the proposed activity, are necessary considerations in the production of a successful final result, regardless of the topic.

According to the report, on an average weekday there are two hundred and ninety-six visitors to The Woodlands where sixty-six percent of those users are walkers or runners, approximately fourteen percent are there to walk their dogs, and the rest visit for other purposes including reading, sketching or other general leisure activities including tours. Most get to the site by walking, jogging or biking. Based on survey results walking, jogging and programming are the top three activities identified by users as the primary purpose of their visit.¹⁶¹ Two key questions asked on the survey were: What do you want to see more of at The Woodlands? and What do you love? Most people asked for additional passive use amenities but also for information about the history of the site, horticultural information, and access to the building.¹⁶² As for what people love about the site, thirty-nine percent used words like peace, quiet and tranquility; twenty-nine percent the nature, trees, or greenery; and twenty-one percent said history, the mansion or graves.¹⁶³ These are particularly important because the answers can help guide staff members as they consider both the types of narratives which might be the most interesting to their audience as well as the methods which might reach the most visitors.

In addition to these important statistics and insights into the user profiles, the report outlines the transition between private estate and cemetery along with delineating the various time periods and subsequent landscape layers of the site. The Woodlands defines the William Hamilton Era as 1766-1813, encompassing the time between his coming-of-age and

¹⁶¹ Woodlands Connect, 4-5.
¹⁶² Ibid., 4-5.
¹⁶³ Ibid., 4-5.
his death. Hamilton had an early interest in horticulture and while he made modifications and improvements to the grounds beginning in 1779, it was not until 1785 that he dedicated himself to crafting an English landscape on the banks of the Schuylkill. His dedication paid off as almost every guest to his estate remarked on the lush growth, intricate approach, and extensive greenhouses.

Included in the Woodlands Connects are goals important to understanding how interpretation should fit within the site, particularly the landscape. A visitor today has open access to the grounds. The gates are open from dawn until dusk, and regular tours of the mansion are offered from April to October. Given Hamilton’s penchant for plants, the tour of the house mentions his lifelong horticultural obsession, but the landscape is interpreted through three posted, exterior signs – one just inside the gates discussing the history of the site, the second near the stable focusing on the architecture of that building, and the third, posted near the mansion explaining the history of the greenhouse and hothouses demolished after the cemetery was established. These signs, while informative, are short on details certainly owning to the fact that a posted sign can only contain so much information.

The fact that the site has more information to offer and the explicit visitor goals outlined in the plan are a clear indication of the desire to address the existing interpretive deficiencies. Included in these goals are understanding both the changes and continuities of the site, building the connection between the house and its grounds and inspiring others to

164 Woodlands Connects, 12-13.
166 Woodlands Connects, 12. This is just one example of the type of letter or journal entry, The Woodlands has copies of others.
167 Observations made by author’s multiple visits to the site.
explore and experience the significance of the site. Woodlands Connects clearly identifies three goals, three key visitor take-aways, with a specific focus on interpretation,

1. Understand how site has both changed and stayed the same over time, why the mansion is here and its relationship to the cemetery
2. Understand the connection between the house and the grounds – including the proximity to the river – and the site’s multidisciplinary historical significance.
3. Be inspired to tell others about their experience with, and the significance of the site.

By applying the lens Dell Upton applied to his discussion of Monticello, one which layers the contributions of owner, enslaved and employed, to The Woodlands, the resulting interpretation is equally nuanced. A timeline exploring both the changes and consistencies over time, along with the relationships between landscape and building can be refined, and modern interjections can be minimized through the contemplation of previous viewsheds. The desire to impart more information, to expand narratives at The Woodlands, requires creativity and imagination because the loss of physical fabric integral to those stories renders them invisible and undetected at present.

Tactical urbanism thinking and strategies are an excellent fit for The Woodlands and the field of historic site management. Given the palimpsest at the site and the need to use time and resources efficiently on its fifty-four-acres, the application of tactical urbanism thinking with its temporary nature, low physical impact, and responsiveness to the needs of visitors, interpretation of this once-necessary path is feasible and applicable. The site has

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168 Woodlands Connects, 24-25.
169 For The Woodlands, multidisciplinary historical significance refers to the numerous academic and cultural pursuits interests encompassed in the past use or ownership of the site including early botanical and horticultural introductions or discoveries, the landscape design and development of the Hamilton estate, the architectural significance of the mansion and outbuildings and the later development of the cemetery along with the famous individuals now buried within the boundaries of the grounds.
170 Woodlands Connects, 24-25.
documentation and significant history to build upon, as well strong community interest, and multiple social media platforms on which to solicit feedback. The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation also has the institutional capacity and track record to show grant-makers that it can receive funds for proposed projects, steward the money appropriately and grow community participation in the process.

As a site with so many layers and components to the stories it tells and represents, The Woodlands fosters a range of user and interest groups including runners, garden and cemetery enthusiasts, historic house buffs, Anglophiles and those in the community who view the site as much needed green space in the dense urban fabric. These many groups offer a tactical urbanism project numerous perspectives and possible interests in addition to the steady flow of regular and occasional visitors with a vested interest in the fate of this cemetery and estate.
Figure 46. “Andrew Hamilton’s Mansion, Woodlands Cemetery.” Photo Source: Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation Archives.
Figure 47. Sketch of Hamilton's Woodlands by Dr. Charles Drayton. Diary from 2 November 1806, original owned by Drayton Hall, National Trust for Historic Preservation. Photo Source: Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation Archives.
Figure 48. Entrance to the Cryptoporticus, West End. Would have connected to the subterranean path, 2016. Photo Source: Author.
Figure 49. Smedley's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Samuel L. Smedley. Smedley's Atlas of the city of Philadelphia, carefully prepared from official records in the survey department of the city of Philadelphia, and from private records and original surveys, exhibiting on a large scale the size of blocks, width of streets, courts and alleys; location of churches, public buildings, parks, squares, cemeteries, rail road routes; and the extent and present position of buildings throughout the city by Samuel L. Smedley. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1862. Photo Credit: West Philadelphia History Center Website.
Figure 51. The Woodlands: 18th Century Features. Woodlands Connects. 2015. Photo Credit: The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation. This map shows an overlay of the Cemetery map with the Hamilton Landscape features. This is important for understanding the way the landscape was altered by the Cemetery Company to facilitate better use as a cemetery.
Chapter Four: Re-designing the Past, Applying Tactical Urbanism to The Woodlands

The role and appearance of the garden in the United States has changed with taste and accepted comportment. In the eighteenth century, the garden was a formal space, which served as an extension of the polite entertaining space of the parlor.\(^\text{171}\) In England and the colonies, this formality gave way to a more natural style, still bringing the house out into the landscape, but with curves, slopes, and serpentines wrapping around small groves of trees to produce carefully designed views and vistas in order to impress and promote gentility.\(^\text{172}\) Even in these exterior spaces, the individual plants were intended to spur appropriate conversation not unlike other interior ornaments.\(^\text{173}\) Regardless of the house or the design of the landscape, the two individual components were necessary to act as the stage set for the lives of polite and refined society. The same is true of The Woodlands, for it was also a stage set customized for Hamilton’s particular family needs and individual interests. The documentary evidence left behind by Hamilton and his guests reflected this same type of design, one heightened by the all-consuming interest the proprietor had in all things botanical. As Chapter Three: The Woodlands, A Philadelphia Site explains, Hamilton’s mansion is now unmoored from the original landscape (figs. 52, 53). The erasure of the subterranean path, regrading, paving and replanting done by the Cemetery Company over the years have reshaped the area around the mansion, producing an approach more like an allee than the screen Hamilton built (figs. 54, 55, 56, 57).

\(^\text{172}\) Ibid., 127-131.
\(^\text{173}\) Ibid., 127-131.
Tactical urbanism is a strategy for temporarily altering space in its own right but it also employs a particular structure of design-thinking to create well-thought-out ideas that allow the process to continue forward from a solid foundation (fig. 58). The first step is to **empathize**, “understand for whom you are really planning or designing.”\(^{174}\) In the case of The Woodlands and its subterranean path, the audience consists of historians, scholars, occasional and regular visitors, members and even regular cemetery users who may not know the connections between the mansion and their favorite running path. It is important to note that staff resources do not permit extended hours presenting tours or visitor guidance, so any addition must stand on its own without substantial explanation. The second step is to **define**, “identify a specific opportunity site and clearly articulate the root causes of the problems that need to be addressed.”\(^{175}\) It is this second step which causes some problems for a historic site simply by the given definition. The individual place has already been determined and the cause of the problem is the fact that long ago, the Cemetery Company filled in the subterranean path to better suit the needs of burial. Visitors cannot easily understand the lost landscape because it has not been adequately articulated.

Having understood the problems currently associated with the interpretation of the landscape immediately surrounding the mansion on the property and the identity of those who are the intended beneficiaries of such information, the third step is to **ideate**. Ideation is the period when a group or individuals, “research and develop ways to address the defined problem.”\(^{176}\) In this particular instance, research included the various primary resources left behind by visitors and the maps which describe the work done by the Cemetery Company.

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\(^{176}\) Ibid.
The proposed design is crafted by engaging with the history of the site, pertinent case studies, the methodology of tactical urbanism, and current landscape architecture design methods.

The fourth step, prototype, is where planning for “a project response that can be carried out quickly and without great expense,” is done.\textsuperscript{177} This thesis incorporates the information gained from the ideation phase to propose a design which has multiple components that can be installed all together or as individual components based on budget and available volunteer or staff labor. The final step, test, where the site staff will “use the build-measure-learn process to test the project and gather feedback,” will not be explored in this thesis.\textsuperscript{178} The Build-Measure-Learn plan is a simplified version of this last phase where the idea is created, the reaction of visitors gauged, and that response incorporated into the next iteration of the design to be implemented at the next intervention.\textsuperscript{179} This final step, actually the beginning of the longer process of interpretation, cannot be undertaken in the span of a semester and is presented as the theoretical next step to be taken by The Woodlands Trust staff and board.

The final design for the The Woodlands is composed of a number of pieces, which are laid out in the modern map of The Woodlands Cemetery (Appendix A., 107). These individual components work together to restore the feeling and impression of the subterranean path which once existed and has since been covered. To achieve this goal, a designer or site staff member must consider the components of the past and those which will facilitate a full experience for a modern audience. Imagining that space requires a

\textsuperscript{177} Lydon, et al, \textit{Tactical Urbanism.}
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
composition of sensations - the feeling of packed earth beneath one’s feet, the play of light as one emerges out of the depths, and the thick screening of a fence and junipers long destroyed. Of significant use to this interpretive installation is the sketch and accompanying text left behind by Dr. Charles Drayton in his journal. This first-hand account of the experience and materials used by Hamilton are important for the interpretation of the path moving forward. To better understand the written text through its physical manifestation in drawn in the sketch, Appendix A. includes a rendered map with the key quotations overlaid on their physical locations. By thinking through the approach to the mansion from the standpoint of both a servant and a guest, because Drayton had the opportunity to see the landscape from both perspectives, an interpreter can better articulate the experience (Appendix B., 108).

To begin, there must be a replication of the meander of the path to demonstrate to people the way an individual moved through the landscape. Because it is not feasible or advisable to dig to the original depth, both for safety and the disruption of archaeological layers, it must instead be created in another way. Given the botanical history of The Woodlands and the fact that the path led to the greenhouse, a walkable groundcover planting will be planted in the location of the former path.¹⁸⁰ These plants will articulate the placement of the path and connect the landscape to larger themes of the site. Having established a material, the next step is to decide the best way to lay out a plan. Using the general guideline of the path, as its exact location is still to be determined, the groundcover is

¹⁸⁰ This groundcover will require maintenance to keep dense in some areas and progressively less in others. As a tactical urbanism project, it may be determined that the path being planted at one density is sufficient in combination with the panels and light to establish the path and visitors understand the change in grade from other sources. If the varying densities are determined vital to the project, the specific species of plant will determine the required amount of maintenance time.
placed at the highest density closest to the mansion where the path was the deepest. As the edge of the path gets closer to point where the historic user would reach the ground line, the cover plantings thin so as to show the gradual transition from subterranean to terrain. Both the visual change and the difference in the sensation of walking on grass or denser planting illustrate the path as it would have been but in a way feasible for this modern site.

Next, the screened nature of the path must be remade to offer an experience of the shielded quality, which Hamilton utilized to prevent visitors from seeing the service path and its regular inhabitants. The wooden fencing and the juniper trees described in Drayton’s journal were key to this screening and so are important for the design of the feature in the tactical proposal. To mimic the regular planting of a series of upright trees, the proposed design features a series of upright, wooden panels, angled to the edge of the path and placed at regular intervals. These panels are represented in Appendix C with two designs, one a simple rectangle and the other a simple rectangle with the outline of a juniper tree on one edge to represent the original plants that made up Hamilton’s screen (Appendix C., 109). The angling maintains a solid mass from a distance but a visitor “using” or experiencing the place would have the opportunity to peek through the screen, accounting for the space which occurs naturally as trees grow. In addition to the placement of these panels as a means to represent the plantings, the panels also enhance the experience of the path’s original subterranean construction. Beginning at the top, a series of thin, horizontal rectangles are cut into the wooden pieces, increasing in number as one moves away from the house and out toward the stable. The introduction of light from the top recreates the feeling of walking down the path by allowing more light and visual access to the grounds outside of subterranean course across the landscape. The panels are also painted in a gradient, which
begins with the dark black-brown of the earth and ends with a light, pale blue to mimic the color of the sky. Again the transition represents the spectrum of visual experience original to the path as well as those found in the use of the service corridor.

Given the nature of the design, the panels and the path could be experienced to a very similar effect in either the day or night, with a series of uplights standing in for the daylight. Appendix D has a perspectival representation of the path in the daytime (Appendix D., 110). The versatility of the design in this way offers the potential for programming in the day or night, lending a deeper exploration into the world of service at night, particularly given the common lighting schemes placed in gardens for evening entertainments. Additionally, the installation is designed to expand, through the inclusion of additional panels, or condensed to accommodate fewer pieces based on the budget and available space. It would also be possible for the design to use the simple, rectangular panels and the site could plant, in the ground or in pots, other juniper trees to represent the screening. For example, The Woodlands hosts a number of private events and may not wish to extend this type of interpretive installation into the large, open green space closer to the stable for the use of these individuals. If the proposed plan encroached on the area promised to an event rental, it is possible to decrease the number of panels and still have the desired effect realized.

Figure 52. Woodlands Mansion, North Elevation, Winter 2016. Photo Source: Author.

Figure 53. Woodlands Mansion, North Elevation, Winter 2016. Photo Source: Author.
Figure 54. Area West of the Woodlands Mansion, Location of Former Subterranean Path, 2016. Photo Source: Author.

Figure 55. Area West of the Woodlands Mansion, Location of Former Path Showing Relationship to Mansion and Cemetery Era Road, 2016. Photo Source: Author.
Figure 56. West of the Mansion, View Across Location of Former Path Showing Route to Stable in the Distance, 2016. Photo Source: Author.

Figure 57. West of the Mansion, View Looking North. Shows current relationship between the mansion and the location of the path, including the disruption of the cemetery era road, 2016. Photo Source: Author.
Conclusion

While the designs for The Woodlands are an important site-specific result of this project, the true larger lesson from this thesis is the usefulness and efficacy of tactical thinking and process as applied to historic site interpretation. Because the experience of visiting a historic site is a visceral one, this thesis began with questions of how to activate visitor imaginations so that they can experience, or at least sense, the invisible past and its lost elements. Full-on restoration, an effective method to help individuals understand the three-dimensional reality of a place, is often cost prohibitive and destructive to later layers of the past. Historic site managers and interpreters seek to replicate the experience of physical tangibility, even when they cannot afford reconstruction. Tactical urbanism is one way to stimulate imagination, intervening in the physical environment, without expending capital or staff time and in a way that treads lightly on the physical historic resources. Tactical urbanism continues to produce tangible outcomes in communities across the country. People strive to make a difference in their daily lives through temporary means, be they for one day or for three months. For historic sites that face the reality of ever-shrinking human and financial resources, this design-thinking process can bring about meaningful emotionally impactful experiences for visitors.

As an ongoing process, with real community input, tactical urbanism projects foster long-term relationships with individual visitors because they build on conversations and feedback. Recent trends in increased use of contemporary art installations or other fine arts performances are not necessarily a detriment to the future of historic sites, but these individual projects do not have the same conversational and evolving components. Individuals are invited to find deeper meaning in one artist’s vision, but these events are
often minimally compatible with mission or capacity building in the long term. These short-
term installations have not proven effective in growing the donor and membership bases of sites around the country nor in raising funds to secure the future. Events draw attention, but often only spark new themes for a moment without allowing for the depth and breadth of new narratives to develop and take hold.

Tactical urbanism is at its core a preservation process because it can include history and acknowledge the layers of a place without requiring the destruction of that past. And, at the same time, it allows the testing and measurement of how an actual audience, the desired audience, responds to the proposed intervention and interpretation. By learning from what occurs through a flexible, actual, relatively low-cost, constructed design and not through public meetings with proposals and images, the historic site can serve its core preservation and education missions and audiences through careful response to visitors’ impressions and understanding.
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Submitted by Mark B. Thompson Associates LLC, Architecture and Planning on behalf of the Master Plan Committee and Design Team, _Woodlands Connects_, April 2015.


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