



HARTFORD HERITAGE PROJECT

“Using Hartford as a Learning Opportunity in Architecture Classes”

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Suggested Partners: Bushnell Park, the former Colt factory, buildings along Main Street

1. Architectural Designing I

We typically use Bushnell park in Design I and then change the project according to what we want to study. This year we used it in the design of an open-air camp in Bushnell park during COVID:

Students were given the task to solve a design problem in an urban setting involving the community using the City of Hartford and Bushnell park as our site. The semester-long project included learning about the history of Bushnell park and its designer Jacob Weidemann. Students learned about the development of public urban parks in the United States at the time of its design and implementation. Additionally, they learned about “open-air schools”, popular in the early 1900’s in Europe and the US, during the last pandemic of 1918.

Discussion and design revolved around how to make Bushnell Park a place that remains relevant as an important resource for the community. In this case for 2020-21 in a time of need during COVID provide a safe and fun summer camp for ages K-12.

The students studied how the park related to the street grid, transportation routes and where the safest place would be to place an entrance gate for the camp. They had to decide how and where along the park the campers would arrive at the beginning and end of the day. They needed to consider that depending on where they lived, how old they were, and who might take them the modes differed. The camp had to be accessible by city bus, bike, school bus and by foot.

They had to come up with a theme for the camp and connect it to the paths leading to the different camp buildings. The camp had different structures from eating/cleansing areas to activity pavilions, including the major multi-use open -air structure with computer stations that could completely open for cross ventilation.

2. Construction Materials and Methods

Both during discussions and for written quizzes we cover the concept of sustainable communities and cities and “Smart -Growth” for construction and design. I always reference the urban planning past and present within the City of Hartford.

For example, the urban renewal failure of the 1970’s of abandoning Main Street in Hartford and putting the Highway through it. This splits up the city displacing the Black community and created a divide between the Black community and the rest of the city. We talk about equity issues on housing in the new plans for housing including affordable in Hartford. The recent addition of the Yard Goats stadium, brought jobs and new activity to the city after business hours and on weekends following the concepts of “Smart growth.”

We discuss environmental benefits of sustainable planning in former industrial areas of Hartford being redeveloped from unsightly and dangerous Brownfield sites to apartments,

offices and schools around the former Colt Factory. This creates equity issues related to gentrification affecting the community negatively by raising rents and home sale values.

3. **Architecture of the World**

Students are required to do several large-scale sketches related to the period we study, and they are required to draw buildings from those styles found in Hartford.

Modernist -the two-sided Phoenix building, The Atheneum -all different styles, Neo-Classical – buildings on Main Street including our college building by NY architect Cass Gilbert and Old State House, by Bulfinch.