

based community outreach efforts, it is likely that the design would have answered many of the functional desires of the involved community members, but the multi-generational and cultural spirit of the park's design and the overall community's dedication to its completion would not have materialized.

## CONCLUSION

For a design to be responsive to a place and its people, the vision for the design needs to reflect that community. The designer must actively seek the involvement of diverse community members in identifying this vision. The participatory design process used in the Knights Landing project allowed us to reach many members of the community and to engage them in the discussions and decision making. Children, teens and elderly, as well as adults, were engaged in various stages of the design process. The involvement of Latino/a and Anglo community members was actively encouraged and supported. These diverse groups worked separately and together to understand their own desires for the park design and to develop a design that would be supportive of their collective vision. Other communities will have different residents, issues, and desires, but the lessons learned in Knights Landing will be helpful to designers assisting with their planning efforts.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Construction documents were not prepared during this studio, but student involvement in the realization of the Knights Landing park continued afterwards. Several components of the master plan have been implemented including the design and installation of a playground, the siting and construction of the Knights Landing Family Resources Center (FRC) and the landscaping of the FRC entry.

<sup>2</sup> For our purposes opinion leaders were persons who represent a larger group in the community or who are in some way more involved with decision-making for the community.

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# CRAFTING WESTPORT

## How One Small Community Shaped Its Future

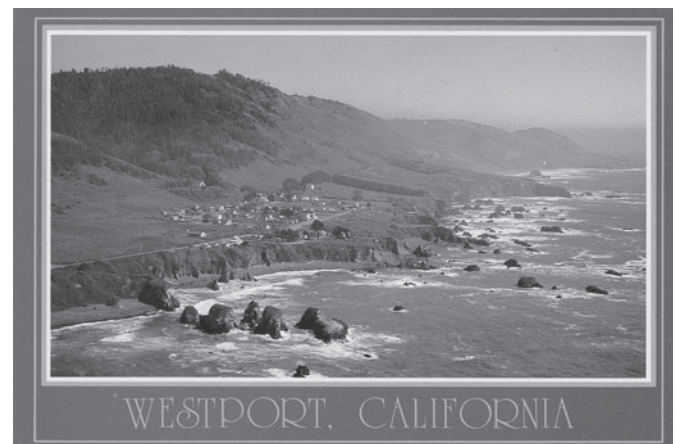
Douglas Kot and Deni Ruggeri<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**This paper discusses the ongoing participatory design effort in the small coastal community of Westport, California since May 2003. It opens with background information about the identity of its people and places, followed by detailed discussion of methods and results used during the process of designing its new town center. While the Westport community is, in many ways, representative of others of similar size and location, its idiosyncrasies led to unique results with regard to both methodology used and design outcome. The evolving needs of the community and their changing opinions regarding the location, functional relationships and views were incorporated in a design that was carefully crafted, adjusted and calibrated throughout the process. Moreover, the effects of a highly identifiable physical environment on residents' perceptions of spatial form resulted in sophisticated design solutions. Additionally, the way of life in Westport defined the need for a flexible process that addressed the community's remoteness and limited resources.**

### THE COMMUNITY

Westport sits on the edge of California's Lost Coast—it is the northernmost town on Highway 1. Similar to its environment, Westport has always been a community of rugged individuals. It owes its history to the lumber industry, whose peak occurred by 1900, when it was the largest town on the north Mendocino



*Figure 1. Postcard of Westport, California.*

Coast. However, the rough coastline, strong winter storms and newly completed rail service to nearby Fort Bragg soon spelled the end of Westport's boom. The lack of economic pressure during the twentieth century left an intact village of historic New England saltbox houses. Today's full-time population of approximately 150 and service area of less than a thousand people fits easily into this one hundred year old setting.

Nowadays, a handful of commercial establishments provide limited employment opportunities. Most residents who work are engaged in informal agriculture or employed in the health care service sector in Fort Bragg. While they are aware of the village's limited resources, local residents wish for new economic development opportunities that could provide a few more jobs for locals and attract new families: goals that can only be achieved if new houses are built.

The physical geography of Westport is at the same time its most valuable asset and one of its greatest shortcomings. With no access other than California Highway 1, which winds along the coast, Westport has remained just beyond the reach of second-home real estate pressure. Its isolation has helped preserve its tight-knit community, confirming it as a place where residents all know each other and conflicts are resolved through an old-fashioned show of hands. In more than a few instances, Westport residents have shown a deep commitment to their community, coming together and setting aside conflicts in order to resolve problems the village has faced. They have succeeded in saving the Headlands from development, built a small school and church and have managed to build a water treatment facility: an ambitious undertaking for such a small community.

California coastal communities like Westport are at a crucial point in their history. The rising demand for vacation homes and real estate prices has led developers to smaller, more vulnerable communities for easier and more profitable real estate opportunities and brought San Francisco Bay Area tourists to increasingly remote coastal towns. It would appear to some that tourism and real estate may be the only economic prospect left for residents struggling to survive the shutdown of the last timber mill. Today, only half of Westport's housing stock is occupied year-round by permanent residents, many of whom are being forced to search for more affordable places to live. For those who remain, the challenge is to accommodate tourism without it dominating the local identity.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The fear of tourism, gentrification and identity loss are common concerns for residents of small coastal towns like Westport. In the past, the residents have banded together and fought developers' attempts to turn the village into a second-home enclave of part time residents without roots in the place (McNally, 1987



*Figure 2. Aerial Photo of with the "Pea Patch" boundaries highlighted. (Graphic: Westport Community Design Team)*

and Hester, 1988, 1987). At this time, however they recognize the need for a community-wide vision to guide their future. As a result, they have chosen a democratic design process as an instrument to help them reclaim control over their own community and achieve the desired improvements.

The recent process of "Crafting Westport" originated when two long-time residents acquired the prime development site known as the "Pea Patch," a 45-acre parcel of land to the north and east of town. This land was scheduled for development of 10-15 trophy vacation homes that would have sprawled on four-acre parcels across the entire site. The two residents had a radically different vision. To make more than an exclusive second home subdivision, their intent was to preserve most of this land as open space and wildlife habitat, build a few houses, and donate the land for a Community Center. It became clear through the process that any development must be consistent with the character of the historic village while providing a balance of jobs and housing suitable to both the existing community and new families.

## PROCESS

Westport's Citizen Participation followed the community development framework outlined in Randy Hester's "Planning Neighborhood Space for People" (1982) and "Community Design Primer" (1990). This method seemed particularly appropriate to the task of creating a design for new development and public facilities while at the same time working on a strategic vision for the future of the community. Moreover, the methodology had been previously applied in communities such as Manteo, NC and Caspar, CA, which are similar to Westport in size

and location and had succeeded in helping those communities shape their future. Through Hester's Twelve Steps, residents were able to participate actively in the design of their neighborhood rather than having to accept the solutions envisioned by an outside professional. The "Crafting Westport" process employed the modification of the Twelve Steps outlined below.

### Listening

The Westport Listening Process began in September 2003 and continued through April 2004. The list of potential interviewees was generated from the county of Mendocino record of property owners. This list was later reviewed and edited and cross-referenced against another list later provided by the clients. Approximately 120 person-hours were devoted to interviewing a large majority of full time residents and many of the second-home owners. In total, 54 personal interviews were conducted and two informal conversations occurred. Additionally, small group Listening occurred with members of the Parent's Club on 25 September 2003 and the Westport Village Society during their annual meeting on 7 November 2003.



*Figure 3. Photo of Listening taking place on the headlands. (Photo: Jacque Armstrong)*

The interview questions were developed and refined by the design team. The questions were designed to begin broadly and then focus on site-specific information. The first six questions were aimed at establishing what the quality of life in Westport is like. Questions seven through ten focused, more specifically, on Westport and the lives of the residents in more detail by asking them to describe their favorite locations for a variety of activities. The next questions were designed to address the future of Westport by asking about growth and change. Questions 18 through 23 focused further on the "Pea Patch" and potential uses for the site. The three final questions were open ended, allowing residents to add any further comments on Westport, the process, or the list of interviewees.

With the exception of a few contrasting views of what the future of the village should be, most residents showed support for the creation of a new Community Center and the need for new economic opportunity. The interviewees expressed the desire that new buildings be consistent with the Westport building tradition and that new housing units be affordable. Overall, the

Listening step provided the Westport Design Team with a clear set of goals for the future of the Pea patch and the overall community.

Feedback on the interviews from residents was favorable. Many residents commented that the "painless" interview allowed them to recall memories they had forgotten. Some residents felt there was some redundancy in the questions. This was particularly evident in the section regarding growth and change. During the development of the questions, the design team felt it was important to distinguish between these concepts. However, forcing our professional jargon on people did not lead to the expected result. During the interviews some residents used the concepts interchangeably, proving that the distinction between "growth" and "change" was not made clear to the residents.

### Workshop

Given the remoteness of Westport, the Community Design Team's effort was grouped into a few weekend-long workshops during which the community was involved in the design process through a variety of activities and events. The first workshop took place on November 8, 2003 at the Westport Community Church and involved over 30 people, including old and new residents.

The workshop started with a verbal introduction that focused on answering questions with regard to the meaning of community participation and the extent of the residents' involvement in the design of a Community Center. The introduction was followed by a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the inventory findings and the Listening interview results. Later, the workshop's participants had the opportunity to review, confirm and rank the list of potential goals and compile a list of priorities for the village. This information, together with the results of the activity mapping, became the foundation of the programming exercise and walking tour that followed.

The programming exercise was the first crucial step towards design and development of a plan for the site. The Walking Tour allowed the Team to learn about patterns, sacred places and possible user conflicts that became an essential part of the development of a spectrum of plans and a final design.

### Introducing the Community to Itself: The Data

This activity was intended to establish the dialogue between the residents and the design team. The presentation focused on, "What we (as outsiders) know about your community" and provided an opportunity for the residents to clarify misrepresentations. This was a particularly important step for the new residents of Westport that allowed them to actively participate in the workshop. Additionally, it created the desired dialogue between the facilitators and the residents as well as dialogue between old and new residents.



Question focus	Goals
Process Questions	Residents appreciated being included, but questioned their role in the process as the land is privately owned.
Westport Positives, Negatives and Potential Improvement Issues	Many residents described Westport as a “family” with some “dysfunction.” Most saw Westport as a “paradise” defined by natural boundaries, but some cited need for new activities in town.
Community Center and School Questions	Those interviewed indicated strong support for a Community Center, yet the need for a new school was not clear from interviews.
Economic Development Opportunities	Creation of new jobs was seen as “key” to attracting new residents. Economic development must be consistent with the way of life and skill set of the residents.
New Housing and Development Issues	Preserving the character of town is the most important issue; most residents agreed that new housing could be a good thing if done properly.

Table 1. Interview Questions.

**Confirming Goals**

From the very beginning of our involvement in Westport, it was clear that a primary objective—in addition to designing a new Community Center—was the establishment of widely supported priorities for the community, which would guide the community’s future actions. The goal setting exercise aimed at confirming the goals that the design team had gathered during the interviews, integrating them with those of the workshop’s participants.

Using the Nominal Group Technique, or NGT, (Delbecq, Van de Ven, Gustafson, 1975) as a guide, participants in each of the teams were asked to answer the question: “Given the summary of the Listening and analysis presented to you, and your experience living in Westport, what do you feel is the most important action to take for the future of Westport?” Each group member listed five of the most important actions for the community and

presented them to the rest of the group. With the facilitator’s guidance, the groups discussed each person’s goals, voted on the five most important, and recorded them on a large sheet of paper. At the end of the process all groups convened and voted on the most crucial goals by placing a colored dot next to those they considered priorities. The exercise resulted in a list of sixteen goals that were posted on the walls as reminders to all participants. The evolution of these goals from the Listening through the Goal Confirming stage is shown below.

A large number of votes went to support a new Community Center and to preserve the architectural character of the village. Consistent with the findings of the interview process, the workshop goals fit into three broad categories: preserving the character of town, creating a stable economy, and building new community facilities.

In general, the goals were clearly articulated—perhaps, because of the structure of the question, which asked the residents to use a noun and a verb in their responses. The use of the NGT as a goal setting exercise was very successful. Using highly structured exercises during the group workshops allowed the facilitators to lead the small groups in a professional manner and immediately established their process expertise, which put the residents at ease and allowed for increased co-operation.

**Activity Mapping**

During the second part of the workshop residents were asked to “draw events, places and things that may be part of the town’s collective memory and to map Westport’s “sacred structure.” In particular, we asked residents to focus their attention on daily activity patterns, community rituals, public events, and special places within the community. Through this exercise, new information about the idiosyncrasies and unique aspects of the community was gathered. Most importantly, this was the first step that revealed the pace of life in the village.

The exercise’s implicit goal was to increase people’s sensitivity to the nuances and unique aspects of their community that constituted its “sacred structure” and learn more about spatial factors in these places. Through this process, the residents communicated their activity patterns to the team, which highlighted the important aspects of the community that “could inspire the form of the design” (Hester, 1982, p. 150). Through this exercise the residents of Westport articulated that lingering in the landscape is an important part of their life.

In general, the residents cited and sketched many activities associated with the existing centers of town. In particular, “news-ing” at the Store and post office or just hanging out on the deck to the south of the Store to drink and relax after work were mentioned as the most important of their daily activity patterns. The events associated with holiday activities were

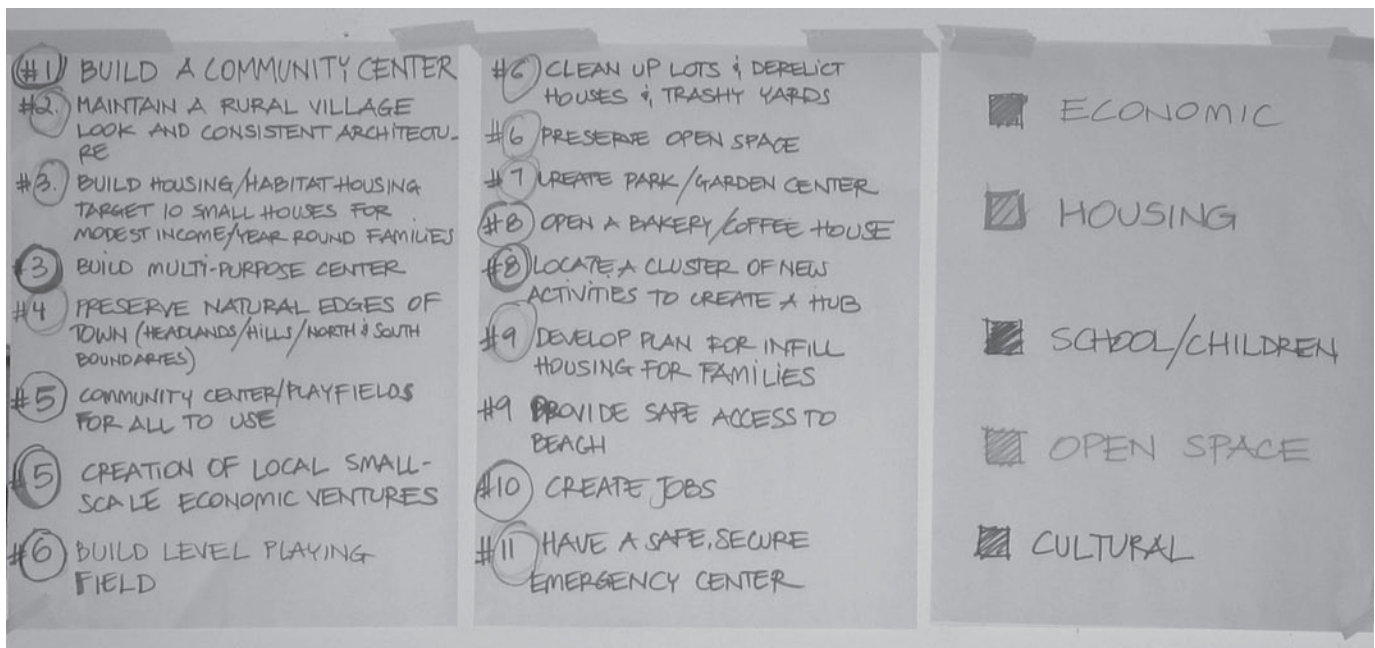


Figure 4. Goals following the Confirming Goals workshop. (Photo: Douglas Kot)

listed by many of the exercise participants, but according to the sketches, they occur in a variety of locations around town. The current patterns of activity included the use of the “Pea Patch” for special events and soccer practice as well as a viewshed north from town. The front porches were often listed as a key component of the social space of the town and as places where neighbors interact with one another.

Additionally, the relationship with nature was a common thread in the mapping of daily activities. Residents cited the views to the ocean and the hills as defining elements of the town. People engaged nature in a variety of ways—from relaxing on their porch, gardening and watching wildlife, to active recreation like walking around town, stopping to view the ocean and the wildlife, hiking and fishing. An example of Westport’s relationship with its surroundings was made evident when the interviewees shared that they hike across a plank to sit on “Bridge Rock,” just off the Headlands, when they need to be alone.

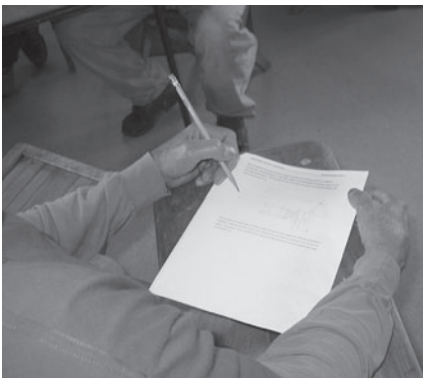
From a methodological standpoint, the Activity Mapping exercise yielded mixed results. The exercise was successful in that residents were asked to think about their activities in depth in order to increase their awareness of the subtleties of the town. However, this application should have been presented as guided fantasy/self-hypnosis/visualization, rather than a drawing exercise. The guided fantasy has a better likelihood of success in this application because it begins with the participants visualizing themselves in their daily activities. The results yield a composition of ideas rather than a composed drawing. In Westport, the residents had a difficult time communicating these issues graphically for fear of being judged based on their drawing skills rather than the content.

### Program for the Pea Patch

This activity used interactive game techniques to develop a program for the “Pea Patch” and the school site. The goal for this exercise was to involve participants in developing a program that could be used to measure the design alternatives similar to Hester’s (1982, p. 153) “conceptual yardstick.”

In order to accomplish both goals, the game used figure-ground maps and a series of cutouts representing possible building types, sizes, and acreage. Each participant was asked the question: “What activities do you most want to do that you can’t currently in Westport?” Participants listed the activities on index cards and started to locate cutouts on the maps identifying the locations where they imagined the activities would occur. The individual designs were shared with group members and ultimately assembled into a plan for the team. The teams were asked to name their design and present it to the larger audience.

The Programming Workshop resulted in a clear design proposal for each group. The spatial aspects of the exercise seemed to be well embraced by the participants. Despite our initial skepticism, the method used was clearly understood by the members of the community. Notwithstanding the excellent results, a few changes could have dramatically improved the exercise. Firstly, the number of cutouts was limited and did not provide participants with a variety of typologies and sizes. Moreover, no specific cutouts for recreation space were available, leading some of the community members to believe they could fit a soccer field into a site much smaller than necessary. A few facilitators used different colors to distinguish each person’s activity and cutouts, leading to plans that were easier to inter-



*Figure 5. Photo of a resident sketching activity setting. (Photo: Douglas Kot)*



*Figure 6. Photo of a facilitator during the programming exercise. (Photo: Douglas Kot)*



*Figure 7. Photo of a facilitator during the walking tour. (Photo: Randy Hester)*

pret and more revealing of possible conflicts between uses and locations. This should have been standardized in advance and would have allowed easier comparisons between the plans.

### **The Community Introduces Itself: The Walking Tour**

On the following day, a walking tour began by looking at the site and then moved to the larger context of the town. The main goal was to re-present the information from the Listening step and its results in a spatial forum. Additional goals included:

- Looking for design opportunities experientially, rather than conceptually.
- Mapping activity patterns of the residents and discussing wind, sun, topographic and other environmental influences on the patterns.
- Soliciting stories related to particular places.

- Gathering feedback that could inform the design of the village center.

The tour touched upon most of the town's "sacred places" as well as a number of other controversial sites. The act of simply walking around the village allowed residents and members of the design team to experience phenomenologically the sacred places they had previously sketched and discussed. This process revealed spatial details and nuances that may have gone unnoticed, or issues they may have otherwise been uncomfortable talking about.

The walking tour was successful because it covered dynamic aspects of living in Westport. Highlights of the tour pointed out the particular way in which people interact with their neighbors, and also allowed the residents to share their beloved views of the landscape. The participants were able to test the site programming decisions developed on the previous day against the complexity of the topography of the proposed site. Further, it called attention to some of the complex design typologies that exist in the town, such as the tradition of leaving half of the lot width open from buildings or other structures that may obstruct views, the importance of views at the end of main streets, and Westport's unique habit of parking on the perimeter of a lot.

From a practical standpoint, the reliance on a script made the walking tour seem (in the words of one resident) "scientific" and allowed community members to develop trust in the process to begin talking freely. However, for some residents the questions seemed to be too structured, giving them the wrong impression that they were not allowed to talk about issues unless included in the script. Once participants warmed up, and got used to the method used, most of them shared their opinions and the questions became almost unnecessary. Because of its size and way of life, the script was too organized for the Westport community, which values informal conversation over structured dialogue.

### **The Alternative Plans**

The design process began in January 2004 as the final studio for the Master's of Landscape Architecture students at Berkeley who were engaged in the project to develop a new town plan for Westport. The studio was directed by Randy Hester and consisted of nine students, two of whom had participated in the interview process in 2003. For the other students, the first exposure to Westport involved reading reports summarizing the natural conditions, architectural heritage, and the interview results, and then visiting Westport for extended periods of time.

The first task consisted of the development of a master plan for the town. In their own design process each student was encouraged to begin thinking about economic development strategies in addition to the physical plan. It was tacitly agreed



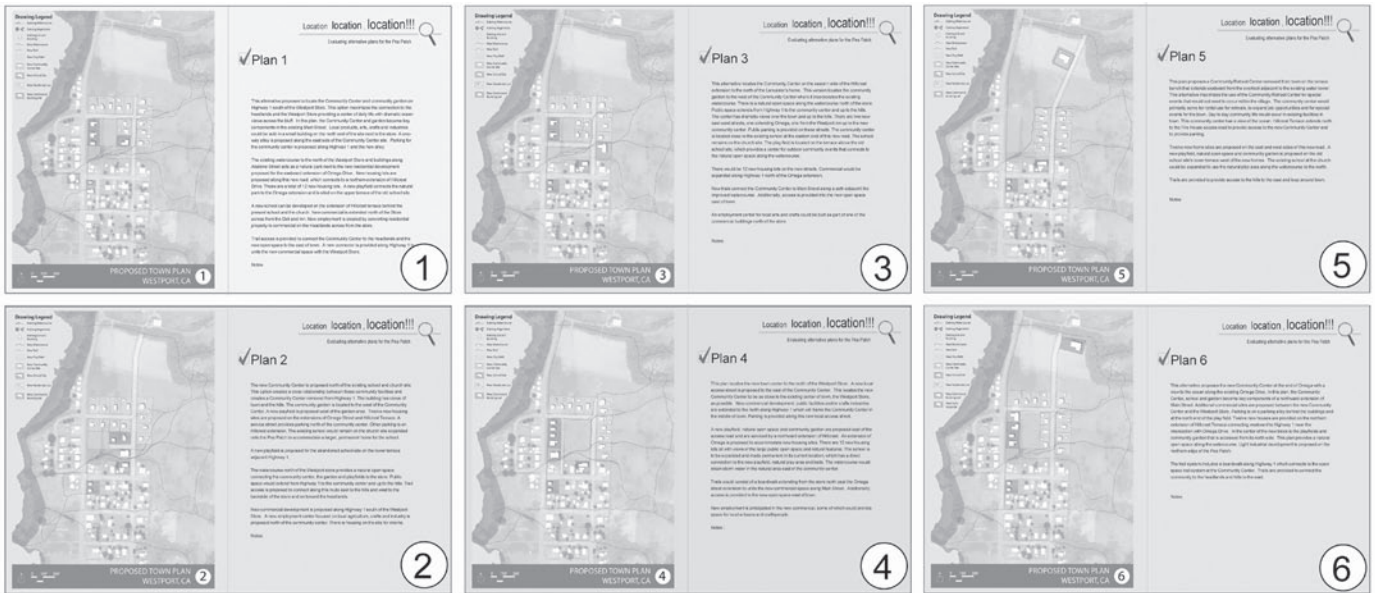


Figure 9. Design Alternatives. (Graphic: Westport Community Design Team)

that any development should be consistent with the previously set goals, program, unique character and skill set of the existing town. The students interpreted this in different ways that led to a variety of alternatives.

The students' designs were synthesized into six alternatives that featured different locations for the Community Center. The alternative plans balanced two distinct design strategies: the ritual town center (separating the Community Center from daily life), and the everyday town center (those that located the new Community Center nearest existing centers). In general, the plans kept new development concentrated near the town

on the previously disturbed part of the site, which served two purposes: first, to maintain the edges of the existing town, and second, to preserve a maximum amount of open space. The plans were presented to the town during a meeting held at the Westport church on April 10, 2004. Residents provided feedback on the presentations and had a lively discussion on each person's favorite plan. Comments and suggestions from residents that were unable to attend the meeting were incorporated through a mail-in survey.

The discussion and survey data were analyzed to determine a direction for the final plan. Through the data, the residents expressed their priorities to the design team, which included:

- The Community Center should be close to the Store and Post Office.

- The new houses should be organized around a central open space.
- The new construction should maintain the town's character.
- The town's edges should be preserved.
- The Community Center should accommodate ritual and everyday uses.
- The future school must have safe access.

These newly refined priorities were mapped over the alternatives to determine how the plans would be modified into the

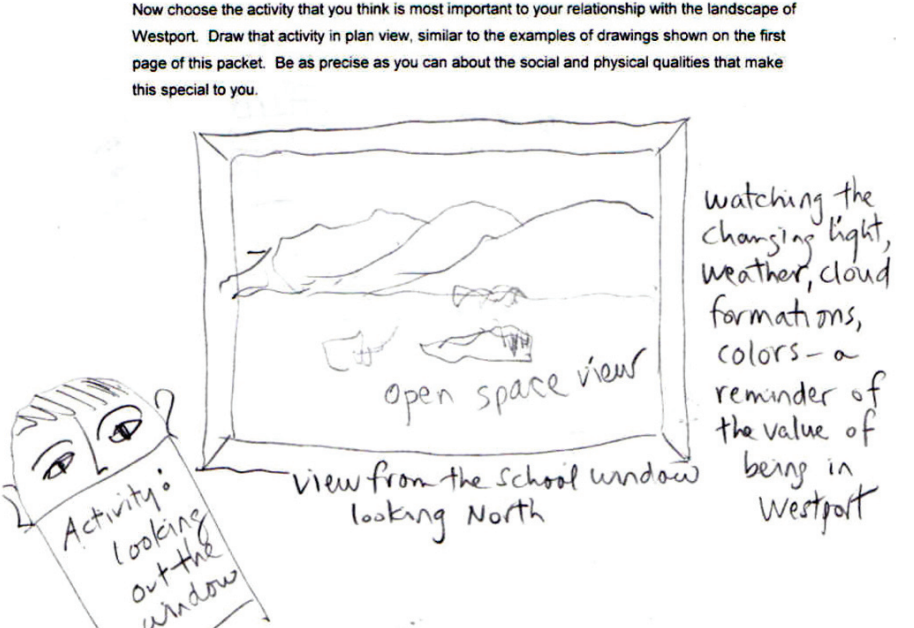


Figure 9. Activity mapping sketch. (Drawing: Westport Resident, Joe Bernard)

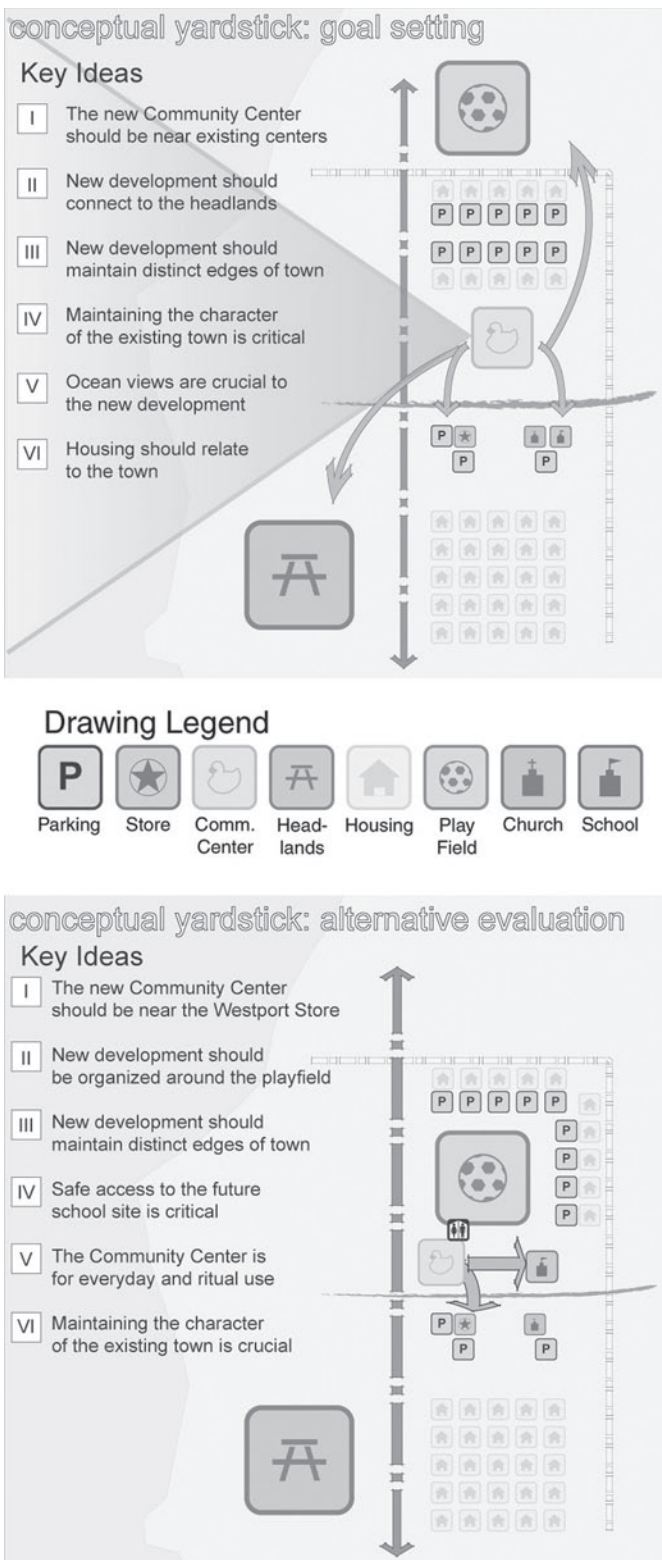


Figure 10. Conceptual Yardstick.

final design. While key components of the priorities carried through all the steps, seeing the concepts displayed graphically allowed the residents to better articulate their spatial needs.

**Final Design**

The final design relied on the previous steps to establish the needs of the residents, the character of town, the community’s way of life and the unique ecology of the place. The plan locates the new town center to the north of the Westport Store relying on the strength of the existing town center. It became clear from observing the residents’ that the maximum distance between the Store and the new Community Center should be equal to the distance from the Store to the church. This distance represents the threshold between walking and driving for most residents in the community. In the plan evaluation the residents wanted to enhance the water drainage immediately to the north of the Store. By combining the desire for enhancement with the need to be close to the Store an opportunity for a community garden is present, which greatly satisfied the residents.

The main organizational element of the final design is the playfield, which is buffered to the south by the community garden and framed to the north and east by new houses. On the west side of the common, new commercial development is extended to the north of the Community Center, which will provide a buffer between the recreation space and the busy road. The common is to become the backyard for the community, where the adults can watch the children safely play. In much the same way that Westport maximizes other resources, and because the common is to function as both the “everyday” and the “ritual” center, it was important to plan for flexible use of the space. The perimeter of the space is envisioned to be spectator space during soccer practice as well as parking for the town barbecues.

**DISCUSSION: “CRAFTING WESTPORT”**

Designing a building, an entire neighborhood, or any other part of a village or city’s landscape through the participation of its users requires an iterative process and various degrees of users’ involvement and intensity. Unlike traditional planning efforts, where the designer’s experience and intuition are given first priority in determining the outcome, a participatory process builds upon the values and needs of a community. These needs are incorporated using methods and techniques that are applied in different ways throughout the process in order to achieve the best possible result (Hester 1990). It is through such reiteration that residents are able to refine the design and adjust it to their changing needs. Because of this constant refinement, results are lasting, valued by all residents, and inspire a stronger sense of ownership. Such a process resembles the work of a craftsman, constantly refining his/her piece until the right balance between the original intention and the uniqueness of the raw material is achieved and translated into a beautiful form.





Figure 11. Final Plan. (Graphic: Westport Community Design Team)

The Westport Design Team has borrowed this concept and adopted it for the “Crafting Westport” process. We feel that it most accurately represents what we learned from our experience in Westport. Our effort was a slow and careful, iterative process, in which users’ needs, values, and local wisdom were heard, analyzed, discussed, and incorporated into the design for the new village center. Rather than problems that needed to be solved, the idiosyncrasies of the community helped us adjust the process and became instrumental to its successful outcome. The evaluation criteria were refined throughout the process—sweeping ocean views lost significance to the importance of the Westport Store. The desire for a central green space aligned with the programmatic need for active recreation to become the town common in the final plan. This main organizing element is both a component of the design and part of the existing community—it represents the village way of life and allows for smaller residential lots consistent with the existing by providing a hierarchy of open space.

### Westport’s Spatial Literacy

Kevin Lynch (1960), Amos Rapoport (1977), and most recently Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) have written about the important role that the environment plays in the development of a strong sense of identity. The Design Team had the opportunity to experience this concept first-hand in Westport, where they became aware of the existence of a symbiotic relationship between the place and its people. This assumption was confirmed by the results of the Listening, which stressed the importance to preserve the steep hillside and its wildlife from being developed and confirmed that the Headlands and the beaches are sacred places. Rather than a background to its residents’ lives, Westport’s environment was a fundamental component of their identity. Framed by water and woods the community exists on a narrow shelf on the edge of the land. By preserving the town’s character, residents seemed to claim the sacredness of their own identity.

The unique symbiosis between people and place led to another idiosyncrasy. The residents’ daily interaction with a surrounding environment that was highly “legible” led to design sophistication—an ability to synthesize, visualize, and resolve highly complicated design problems. On many occasions, residents clearly described their landscape in terms of districts. Ideas (“the Headlands, the flats, or the slope”), easily identifiable edges (“the forest to the east, the rugged coast to the west”), and landmarks (“bridge rock, the cardboard sliding hill,”) translated into designs that displayed many of the characteristics of highly “imageable” environments (Lynch, 1960). Throughout the process, residents clearly understood the importance of preserving the village’s block structure, density, and edge and pushed for “new urbanist” design solutions, displaying an instinctual understanding of complex urban design issues. Similarly, during a later phase in the process when they were asked to choose among varied plan options for the Community Center, the residents of Westport privileged values such as the preservation of open space, a clearly defined village edge, and a tight fabric of smaller lots.

### The view from the inside

Throughout the participation process, the design team gained gradual understanding of the Westport way of life, which informed our process, our evaluation tools, and the final design. Hester (1982, 1990), Tuan (1990), and Gans (1962) talk about a “view from the inside” which describes differences in perception between outsiders and insiders of a community. As the Design Team became more familiar with the way of life in Westport, we noted that the participants’ words never changed, but our understanding of their meaning evolved. As a result, the “conceptual yardstick” (Hester, 1982) used to evaluate the project changed, leading to a better-informed process and place-appropriate design. Additionally, our early misconceptions regarding the importance of views and other organizational elements were clarified.

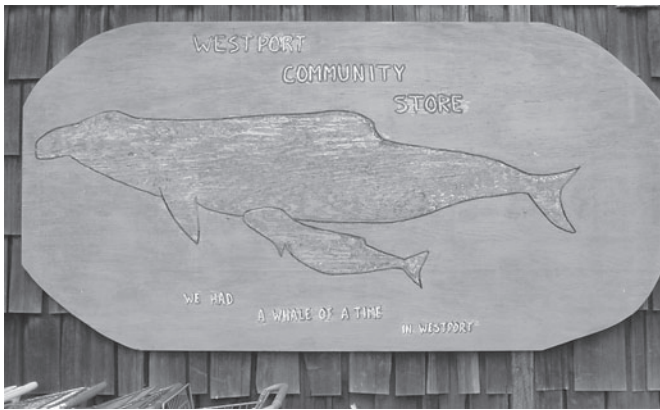


Figure 12. “We had a whale of a time in Westport.”  
(Photo: Douglas Kot)

At the early stages of Listening and Confirming Goals it was clear that the residents thought that landscape views were important organizers of the community. As the design process began, the alternatives sought to provide equal views from all the new houses and a community center with sweeping panoramas to the white water, rocks and sea. The community confirmed our understanding of this important issue, but when voting for alternatives, the plans that oriented views to the town common took precedent over ones with more dramatic views of the ocean. We speculate that the view issue is more nuanced to the community, because the community is surrounded by scenic beauty and if they desire a view they walk to the edge to find it. In contrast, the outsiders—including second home owners, tourists and the Design Team seemed to be most impressed by the sweeping white water views to the Pacific Ocean and assumed the new houses and Community Center should look upon them.

Our original evaluation criteria included strong connections to the existing town centers including the Store, church/school, and Headlands. We also believed that the new housing should compactly adjoin the existing town and that the community center would be physically located in the center for everyday use, or it should be on the edge for the ritual events. Further, it was clear that the community desired a large open space for recreation and community gatherings, but that the current field functioned well for these events. In reality, however, the residents believed that traffic along Highway 1 was too much to force a physical connection to the Headlands. Therefore, the new development was organized around a central town common that could be used for the ritual and the everyday events.

## CONCLUSION

“Crafting Westport” served the community on many levels through both process and design. The residents have created a plan that is spatially compact in order to preserve open space for wildlife habitat and the character of the town. The process has revealed the fine balance between housing, employment,

and community needed for life in Westport, while the final design has emphasized the residents’ needs for affordable housing and childcare over those of tourists.

The story of Westport is about iterative dialogue between designers and residents. It is also about adapting methods to build upon—rather than react to—the idiosyncrasies of a place. A key component of the “Crafting Westport” process was reflecting on what we thought was important as designers, but did not prove to be important to the community. This reflection allowed us to transform the design criteria to integrate the residents’ spatial literacy and inherent knowledge of their community and resulted in a community development project, in the true sense of the word.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Kot and Deni Ruggeri are equal authors of this article.

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