Realigning the Appalachian Trail at Bear Mountain:
Master Plan and Stylebook
The participatory design charettes produced a Master Plan and Stylebook for Bear Mountain State Park.
The mission of the Master Plan and Stylebook is to create guidelines and standards that welcome a diversity of users while actively promoting environmental stewardship and respect for the resource that is Bear Mountain State Park and the Appalachian Trail.
Master Plan

Photo/Sketch Here
Analysis and discussion expanded the scope of the project beyond the refurbishing of the park’s trails. Overarching priorities were created for the project, as well as park and trail-specific goals.
Project priorities ranged from publicizing the project, the process, and the partners, to involving the community through education.
High among the list of park goals was addressing the needs of all users, and highlighting the Appalachian Trail experience.
Trail goals included developing an extremely high quality hiking experience and creating connectivity between the Appalachian and other trails.
The arrival sequence, where visitors see their destination, arrive, and park their car is where the Master Plan begins.

The arrival sequences should be clearly defined from all major arrival points.

- Develop and frame the view across the courtyard lawn to the Inn from Seven Lakes Drive approach.
- Enhance existing view of Hessian Lake from the 9W traffic circle.
- Install stone “beacons” along route to the north and south of entrance and at traffic circles.
The approach to the park should heighten a visitor’s sense of excitement and expectation.

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Visitors should know when they have arrived at their desired destination.
An Entrance Garden at the front of the Bear Mountain Inn will welcome the guests who arrive there.

The Entrance Garden will honor the history of the site through interpretive signage, sculpture, and native plantings.
Because the parking lot is often a visitor’s first experience of the site, these areas will be visually enhanced and made more environmentally sustainable in order to better reflect the over-arching goals of the site.
Site Features

- Entrance Garden
- A.T. Trailhead
- Trail-building Demo
- Education Center
- Zoo and Museum
- Trails
Entrance Garden
The Trail-building Demonstration Plaza will include examples of trail-building techniques:
  * Pinned stone stairs
  * Wooden stairs
  * Wooden bridge
  * Stone crib wall
  * Improved trail surfacing
  * Water-bars

Other design features:
  * Rustic "rock-climbing" wall
  * Textural Pebble River ending in climbable, sculptural boulder pile that echoes Bear Mountain
  * Ample seating and gathering space
AT Trailhead

Scale model of Bear Mountain
Sunken into the ground for bird's-eye viewing
Surrounded by step-down seating
Provide History of the area’s trails
Encourage stewardship
Offer fun and informative facts about hiking and the environment
Utilize and expand existing building
Education Center
Education Center: Directing and Educating

The Education Center will increase pedestrian flow to Trailside Zoo and Museum, which is currently being redeveloped.
Education Center: Directing and Educating

Provides direction at the convergence of two “halves” of Bear Mountain

Associated with existing pavilion structure
Education Center: Directing and Educating

Other Educational Elements:
- Stamp Collecting Program
- For the Appalachian Trail and National Park Service
- From the site’s attractions
- Entrance Garden
- Demo Area
- Trailhead
- Trailside Zoo and Museum
- Volunteers as Educators Program
- Site Tours
The trail should incorporate areas of pause and repose at intervals along the route. These areas, however, should leave enough space for other hikers to pass, not encourage the widening of the trail.

The Appalachian Trail is of primary significance, but other trails on the mountain, including the Major Welch, Suffern-Bear Mountain, 1777E, and Cornell-Mine trails will be upgraded and integrated into the larger trail system.
The Appalachian Trail:

- More accessible on Inn side with wider more developed paths and shallower slopes.
- More challenging on the southern decent.
- Reroute including pass-by of Hiker’s Lounge.

Power Point Notes:

- Use animation to show:
  - where existing trail is used
  - where old A.T. is used
  - where new construction is needed
  - where restoration sites are along existing A.T. that will no longer be used
- South face 2 options eliminates reducency of trails (Major Welch and existing A.T.)
- Peter Jensons benefits and constraints (in his power point)
Trail Features

• Trail experience in areas closer to Inn will be more hardened than others
• Areas of ADA and novice accessibility
• Challenging areas on A.T. for the avid hiker
• Group friendly experiences around high volume areas (Hessian Lake, Hiker’s Lounge, Tower)
• Experiences on the trail allowing solitude and reflection

The trail should be designed to offer a diversity of experiences, be accessible to a variety of user abilities, which includes areas of ADA accessibility, and provide sections of ease as well as sections of challenge. Because the trail passes through both minimally and highly urbanized areas, it offers both very solitary and very social experiences. The varied experiences can offer inspiration and education, not only from Bear Mountain itself, but from the people who come to enjoy its many recreational offerings.
STYLE BOOK

NEED A BLURB TRANSITION…
Built Structures

- Rustic
  - Stone
  - Rough-hewn wood
- Low profile
- Of native materials
- Use existing structures when possible
Signage

Educational/Interpretive signage
- Enhanced at major site features and along nature loops
- Limited on the actual trail

Directional signage
- At all major junctions and site features
- Enhanced at points of possible confusion (summit, road or pavement crossings, places where blazes are not eye level, etc.).

Structures should be unobtrusive but clearly visible and state their message succinctly. Landscape elements fitting with the character of the place will surround signage.

Whether major or minor, the trailheads should be unobtrusive, informational and educational and should, in as few words as possible, impart information on trail etiquette, directions, regulations, and safety. Educational information on hiking, history, volunteerism, and the many trail systems throughout the park should also be included.
Major trailheads

- Include map of site
- Provide detailed information regarding hiking options, trail difficulty and duration of hikes.
- Inform about Leave No Trace Philosophy
- Trail etiquette guidelines
- Trail safety
- Directions
- Park regulations
Minor Trailheads
Intended for trough and day-hikers

- Unobstructed sightline from trail head to nearest trail blaze in both directions
- Defined by human scaled signage, seating, paving and landscaping
- Discourage vandalism or use as shelter

(These would be true for all, also)
• Promotes courteousness between hikers and other park users
• Encourages responsible use of the park and trails
• Encourages support for organizations that manage and maintain the A.T.
• Provides information about different opportunities of exploration in the park, like Museum, Zoo, Tower, Carousel, Rink, etc.
Signage Characteristics

- Constructed of indigenous materials wherever possible
- Minimally intrusive
- Low maintenance materials
- Secured to prevent safety hazards and vandalism

Trailhead structures should incorporate the feel of the surrounding environment and match the rustic character of the architecture in the area. Preferably, the lowest maintenance, natural materials should be used. Additionally, vandal-resistant designs and materials should be selected whenever possible.
- Areas of High Accessibility -
  - Trail width is larger
  - More “constructed”
  - Less challenging hike
  - Allows for high volume of visitors

- Areas of Low Accessibility -
  - Trail width follows narrower A.T. guidelines
  - Less “constructed”
  - More challenging hike
  - Allows for naturalistic A.T. feeling

This might be style book info
Trail System

Goals of the Trail System -
• Clearly defined edges and location
• Exemplify trail building techniques
• Provide “real” A.T. experience
• Allow for more accessible portions of the trail
• Use materials that reflect area aesthetic
• Create naturalistic feeling
Nature Trails
Nature Trails
Materials
Materials
The final trail design should
  • Rely on the expertise of trail building consultants for construction details
  • Be built in consideration of guidelines and standards governing A.T. building and maintenance
  • Reuse and incorporate existing structures
  • Restore areas of trail phased out of use
  • Fit the character of the surrounding natural and built environments
Environmental sustainability?  HAVE WE INCLUDED THIS INTO ALL ASPECTS?

**Style Book**

**Landscaping**

- Plantings of low, native shrubs, herbaceous plants and grasses around signage
- Use of indigenous stone BEACONS to create a consistent style for site elements and to accent plantings and draw attention to major site features
- Employ dissimilar paving designs to define pedestrian vs. vehicular areas
- Consistent, distinct treatment of AT throughout site
- Favor the use of materials that are more sustainable