

## CHAPTER 3

# THE SITE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

The prime and overriding purpose of a World Heritage Site is to conserve the values for which it has been recognized and placed on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Convention therefore requires that nations submit a management plan for sites being nominated. Such plans should include consideration of the proper level of visitor access and tourism at the site. Conservation plans are best prepared by impartial experts with a broad knowledge of the management issues vital to protecting the site's value. As part of this effort, it is important that governments properly identify World Heritage Sites within the national planning process, on land-use plans, and single them out for their importance to all mankind. At the local level, the site manager must monitor the development decisions and the application of the plan at the site and the area surrounding the site.

The degree and the success of planning will vary from country to country but it has become the basic tool for managing land and resources. This chapter provides an overview of basic conservation planning issues that a manager should keep in mind when involved in drafting, discussing and monitoring the site plan.

### Obligations under the Convention

Under the World Heritage Convention and its operational guidelines, it does not matter what general planning or lack of planning there may be in the country concerned. The national government takes on the obligation to maintain the site according to the plan, or, in the absence of a plan, to support the process of preparing and submitting a plan acceptable to the World Heritage Committee.

The plan for the World Heritage Site does not have to fit within, or even have any regard for, the national or state or local planning system. It is for this reason that the Convention is such a powerful conservation instrument. While local authorities should be involved in the plan's preparation, they can only prepare plans to the degree that they have been delegated by the national government that nominated the site. World Heritage Sites are the one type of site where control is usually intentionally moved to the national level so that local authorities cannot operate independently. It is the opposite philosophy in most other cases.

In summary, the World Heritage Convention stipulates the following points in regard to planning:

- 1) The national government must prepare an acceptable plan for the World Heritage Cultural Site to protect the values for which it is nominated.

B) World Heritage Cultural Site nominations will no longer be accepted by the World Heritage Committee unless an acceptable plan, submitted by the national government, accompanies the nomination.

C) Where such a plan does not exist for earlier entries on the World Heritage List, the relevant national government should support the process to prepare and submit such plans.

D) Where such a plan does not exist, the site administrator should be actively encouraging the national government to commit resources to its preparation.

## The Planning Process

In general the planning process can be seen as a three step process:

(1) taking an inventory of existing resources,

(2) categorizing and evaluating those resources and,

(3) from that evaluated inventory, determining priorities for legislation, finances, personnel, equipment, interpretation, marketing, etc.

Help in planning for a World Heritage Site is available from many sectors. Various appropriate government agency planning staffs can and will participate in the preparation of a site management and development plan. Further, within most countries, land-use planning has become one of the mandated requirements of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. As a result, community planning and development skills have developed in health, environment and economic offices.

There are also useful tourism management skills within most countries that are not being drawn into problem-solving at World Heritage Sites. For instance, the planning, design and management of many large resorts draw on the same skills needed for site planning and management. Obviously there are differences between the planning goals for a World Heritage Site and for a resort. However, the issues of efficiency, security and visitor satisfaction are the same. There are others who can help, too. National airline and hotel executives know the economic value of World Heritage Sites. They have in-house professionals, and their skills, leadership and financial and political influence can be drawn into the management and planning process.

## Basic Planning Requirements

Cultural sites, need a comprehensive regulatory plan. This includes:

**Boundary Survey and Description** - The description of the boundaries of the listed site should be clear. Where possible a logical and appropriate buffer zone should also be indicated to assure a managed setting for the place. For planning

issues, the buffer should be treated as if it were part of the listed land even though the intensity of application of controls may be less in the buffer area.

**Land Use Plan** - The comprehensive land-use plan for the site should include any nearby settlements and a full corridor to the nearest urban center. For example, the quality of the road trip from Yogyakarta to Borobudur in Indonesia or from Chichen-Itza to Merida and Cancun in Mexico is crucial to the visitors' overall experience.

At an urban site, the boundary lines and the buffer zones should be drawn to include the protection of total historic streetscapes. In a rural setting, strong visual elements such as hills, lines of trees, old roads and walls should be included within the boundaries. Both sides of any road, river or stream that is used as border line should also be included if they are within the same country.

The site's land-use plan can and should be completed even if regional and/or national plans cannot be prepared at this time. What is important is the detailed creation of the vision to manage World Heritage Sites as part of other related activities.

**Conservation/Site Plan** - At a World Heritage Site the conservation plan is everything. While the official submission of a site management plan is the responsibility of national governments, the site administration should actively participate in its preparation. The conservation plan delineates all of the pertinent conservation issues, analyzes them and determines the scientific limitations of the site. The plan also describes the administrator's concept of tourism at the site -- the tone, vision and opportunities of the visitor experience. Based on this plan, tourism professionals can then be asked to help, and other planning elements can be coordinated.

**A Utilities and Services Plan** - Utilities and services such as electricity, sewers, water, telephones and fire and police protection are useful to both conservation efforts and tourism management. These conveniences are important but never important enough to jeopardize the integrity of the site. Requirements and limits on them must be established so that the delivery of current and projected utilities and services can be accomplished without site damage.

**A Community Development Plan** - The quality of life for the residents within or adjacent to the site has a great impact on the quality of the visitors' experience. Whether it is an urban neighborhood or a rural village, what is good for the residents must be good for the visitors.

Community development is now a recognized field with skilled professionals. Many government departments are involved in community development to deliver medical services, provide for sanitation, build adequate housing and establish useful schools. Agricultural support, development of cottage industries and family planning are among the many activities that are part of community development efforts.

Many countries have job training programs to help the residents to beneficially participate in the tourism sector. Site managers and tourism planners can be important partners in community development.

**A Tourism Plan** - Tourism officials should be consulted as the conservation plan is being prepared but the tourism plan itself should be one of the last over-lays on the planning process. The tourism plan must, as a partner, recognize the goals, physical limits and the visitor opportunities inherent in all of the other elements in the plan. It must address:

- a) Transportation to and from the site, and at the site.
- b) The range of guest services -- accommodations, food, toilet facilities, etc.
- c) Site tours, the training and licensing of guides, travel information and interpretation.
- d) Museum installations, visitor paths, information signs, admission kiosks and sales outlets for film, notions, cards, stamps and souvenirs.

**Coordinating Conservation and Tourism Plans** - All too often land-use plans allow for the building of unsightly eight-story buildings, misplaced parking lots, or the relocation of long-time residents. Such major and minor tragedies and catastrophes can be avoided by coordinating conservation and tourism planning. When a country nominates a site to the World Heritage List, then the full resources of the country must be mobilized to conserve, protect and present it. If site administrators, conservators, community leaders and tourism officials see themselves as part of a larger, over-all planning process, risks and waste can be avoided.

### **Case Study: Angkor**

As Cambodia has opened up, and access to Angkor has become possible, there is grave danger that tourism could be developed before the conservation programs are in place. This would be a sad, short-term mistake because it is the conservation process that should be the tourism feature at Angkor. The quality of the conservation work will determine the quality of the tourism. The quality of life for the residents in the adjacent community of Siem Reap will also be a factor in the visitors' experience. Tourism should be limited and for some time expensive, to be sure that the conservation and community plans are created and funded first.

The monuments at Angkor are important and dramatic, but there must be a comprehensive approach as they are re-opened to the world. It is important also that neither conservation nor tourism divert money away from the urgent social and infrastructure needs of the people of Cambodia.

In this case it has been proposed that the visitors pay an annual entry fee of US\$150.00 which would go into a privately managed conservation fund dedicated to repairs and maintenance of the site. This would limit the number of visitors and would help assure a sound financial base for development. Once conservation funding and community development plans are in place, then tourism could expand.