INVIGORATING THE VLORA WATERFRONT: SITE ANALYSIS

WEST SEGMENT

Existing Conditions
- Wide & Sandy
- Old beach area
- Less urbanized
- Adjacent to Soda Woods
- Traditional tourist structures
- Recently erected high-rise residential structures

Opportunities
- To introduce the promenade and to define the urban border that will connect the sandy beach area to the urbanized area

SOUTH SEGMENT

Port of Vlora ‘hinge’

Existing Conditions
- Narrow
- Well-defined
- Heavily urbanized

Opportunities
- All buildings that stand in between the building line and the sea to be removed
- Possible future plan to another city road parallel to the existing waterfront connection
- Great opportunity for a pedestrian-only promenade

Bay of Vlora

LEGEND: LAND USE
- Residential: Low Density
  0-100 habitants/ha
- Residential: Med. Density
  100-300 habitants/ha
- Residential: High Density
  300+ habitants/ha
- Commercial Facilities
- Industrial Facilities
- Public Facilities
- Sports Facilities/
  Green Spaces
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Tertiary Road
- Existing Green Spaces

NOTES:
- The map exhibits the lack of inland body of water or water features within the project boundary.
- The closest inland waters is located approximately 4.7 miles north of the Port of Vlora.
- There is an opportunity to have the existing port as the center attractions and as well as a functional port itself.
- It is an industrial site as of right now.
Vlora's waterfront is a 3-mile-long stretch of coastline located in the southeastern side of Albania. It is a symbolic waterfront to the people of Vlora that is rich in history. Some consider the waterfront a touristic attraction in Albania, but its current state does not reflect that because it is both disjointed and unattractive. The city of Vlora and the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism wish to develop the waterfront as an iconic destination for potential tourists, as well as current and future residents.

The waterfront is divided into three segments: west-segment, south-segment, and the port. The west-segment is wide and sandy, and currently faces many touristic structures, as well as high-rise residential structures. The south-segment is narrow but very well-defined, and it stands in between an existing road and the sea. The existing road in the south-segment has the potential to be a pedestrian-oriented promenade. The existing port that serves as the hinge connects the two segments. Within the middle segment exist three important features of Vlora: the University of Vlora, the second largest university in Albania, the Museum of Independence, where Albania was declared an independent state, and the port itself.

The concept of the waterfront revitalization offers a design that is focused around these three things: the port, the University of Vlora, and its independence. There is a commonality among the three that is associated with the word “liberation.” The port allows travelers to venture out to the unknown, giving them the freedom and opportunity to see new things. A university is a place where students are open to new experiences and knowledge, allowing them to liberate themselves from their past knowledge. Lastly, independence was declared in Vlora, which simply is the most important event of Albania’s history. To represent these features, two forms, the first being rigid and the second being free forming, were used to signify Vlora’s oppressed past and its bright future.

The concept for the master plan is well represented throughout the site for both functionality and aesthetic purposes. The entirety of the design starts from the center of the project site forming rigid hard line. Subsequently, hard rigid lines deviate into series of arcs and become loose lines until they reach the ends of both south and west segments. The idea is for the lines to represent past to future, or “liberation,” as it get further from the city center. In addition, ample amount of green spaces that have variety of functions are introduced in the master plan. Having this much greenery was vital since there was almost no sign of any when the site was being studied during the analysis phase. Due to the narrow tendency of the site, most of the special destinations neighbor bodies of water that provide unique experience.
Freedom Park is located at the heart of Vlora Waterfront, adjacent to the University of Vlora campus. It is surrounded by many multi-story buildings giving the park a sense of enclosure around the edges. At the same time, it is open in the center by an inlet of the Adriatic Sea, bringing water close for the users to experience. The purpose of the park is to provide access to green space, which the city of Vlora lacks, and also to demonstrate what the beautiful waterfront has to offer to both visitors and residents.

The park is designed so that most of the site is on the existing street level far above the existing water level. Stone steps direct people down to the boardwalk around the park’s edge allowing them to enjoy water from closer. Because the park is split by a body of water there is a pedestrian bridge that serves as the connection between the two halves.

Freedom Park is programmed for a wide range of users and provides both active and passive recreation all around the park. For active recreation there are features like an outdoor amphitheater, step seating, in-ground water fountain which has a versatility to become an ice skating rink during winter, and an urban bosque where users enjoy the company of other people in the shade of canopy trees and the beautiful waterfront. For passive recreation there plenty of open grass and mounds where people can relax in the sun and the sound of waves crashing. Freedom Park is a destination spot with a flexibility that can offer users many forms of fun and exciting entertainment and quiet and serenity at the same time.