ABERCROMBIE & FITCH CORPORATE RETREAT:
DIDACTIC EXPERIENCES IN THE NATIVE MIDWESTERN LANDSCAPE

5TH YEAR COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT
NICHOLAS A. SMITH
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ABSTRACT:

The Abercrombie & Fitch corporation is a specialty clothing retailer that caters to a college age demographic. The popularity of the clothing brand has exploded exponentially since its separation from its one-time corporate parent, the Limited Brands in 1998. The clothing’s theme leans towards the style of Ivy League college students.

The Abercrombie & Fitch corporate headquarters is located on the outskirts of New Albany, Ohio, which is a northeastern suburb of Columbus, Ohio. The architecture of the Adirondack-inspired corporate campus meshes well with the style of clothing the company produces. A&F’s corporate campus is sited on 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings. There are two objectives behind introducing this multi-billion dollar corporation’s headquarters into a native Midwestern landscape. Pulling the new A&F headquarters into this natural atmosphere gives employees and visitors the seclusion and off the beaten path feelings common to a summer camp experience. The A&F campus is designed as an extension of the company’s brand. It is a place for associates to work, play, and live the Abercrombie & Fitch lifestyle. A way of life associated with casual luxury.

The intentionally isolated Abercrombie & Fitch corporate headquarters was completed in 1999. Many campus design problems and needs have become apparent over the past six years. Employees have voiced a desire for more recreational opportunities onsite. The average age of A&F employees is 29. Staying physically fit and active is an overall important issue to this group of people. However, there is currently no recreational trail system in place. Another request, among many other requirements to be discussed later, is the need for employees to gain access to the 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings the site has to offer. Twenty five percent of A&F employees are not from the United States. Another fifty percent of A&F employees are not from the Midwest. Only one-fourth of A&F’s nearly 1,000 corporate headquarters employees have ever had the opportunity to experience and learned from the native Midwestern landscape so prevalent to this location. This diverse, educational Midwestern landscape is underutilized because of current inaccessibility and lack of didactic programming.
This project offers solutions to the many design needs voiced by the employees and day to day participants of the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Headquarters. The main vision and goal of this project is to teach employees and visitors about the diverse Midwestern landscape by immersing them into this 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland environment. Some of the naturalistic design elements and processes associated with this immersion are those of Jens Jensen, a designer who’s love of the Midwestern landscape inspired him to enhance and preserve “native” landscapes throughout his lifelong career. In Jens Jensen’s words “art must come from within, and the only source from which the art of landscaping can come is our native landscape. It cannot be imported from foreign shores and be our own.” Employee engagement with the site will give opportunities for educational and recreational fulfillment. This fulfillment will strengthen the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation as a whole through elevated productivity of more positive and encouraged employees.
INTRODUCTION:

The multi-billion dollar Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation did not begin in 1998 when the retailer became independent of its corporate parent The Limited Brands. The name and the corporation it represents share a long and eventful history.

In 1892 Abercrombie & Fitch began under the name David T. Abercrombie Co., a small waterfront shop and factory in downtown New York City owned by David Abercrombie. David Abercrombie, born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, was a former prospector, topographer, trapper, and railroad surveyor. He was also an inventor. Abercrombie was an ingenious designer of tents, rucksacks and other camping equipment. It was his love of the great outdoors that inspired him to begin Abercrombie & Co., a shop dedicated to selling only the highest-quality fishing, camping, and hunting gear. His clientele consisted of mainly professional hunters, trappers, and explorers. One of his clients was named Ezra Fitch. Ezra Fitch was a successful lawyer in Kingston, New York. He became restless and bored with his life of law. Fitch spent all of his free time trekking the slopes of the Adirondacks and casting fishing flies into the streams of the Catskill. In his search for exceptional outdoor gear, he had come to rely upon David Abercrombie’s shop. He became one of David Abercrombie’s most devoted customers. In 1900 Ezra Fitch convinced David Abercrombie to let him buy into the business and become a partner. By 1904, the shop (which had moved to 314 Broadway) was incorporated and the name was officially changed to Abercrombie & Fitch.

Both David Abercrombie and Ezra Fitch were stubborn, hot-tempered men, and they had vastly different views about the future of their business. Abercrombie was more conservative than Fitch. He was content to continue the store as it was, selling professional gear to professional outdoorsmen. Fitch, on the other hand, was more of a visionary. He was sure that the future of the business lay was linked to expansion, selling the outdoors
and its delights to the general public. Long arguments and a troubled relationship between the two men lead to the resignation of David Abercrombie in 1907.

The store began to expand. Ezra Fitch was a determined innovative man. His imagination resulted in the creation of no ordinary sporting goods shop. Fitch gave the store a genuine outdoor feeling. Stock was not hidden behind glass cabinets. Instead, it was displayed as if in use. He set up a tent and equipped it as if it were out in the middle of the Adirondacks. A campfire blazed in one corner. An experienced nature guide was always in information to interested customers. The clerks hired at A&F were true rugged outdoorsmen. By 1913, the store expanded its inventory to include sport clothing. A&F became the first store in New York to supply such clothing to women as well as men. Shortly after David Abercrombie’s resignation from the company, A&F started publishing a catalog. This book featured 456 pages of outdoor gear and clothing as well as hunting and fishing advise for 50,000 customers around the world.

By 1917 Abercrombie & Fitch became the largest sporting goods store in the world when it moved to Madison Avenue and 45th Street. It occupied an entire twelve story building. Abercrombie & Fitch outfitted many great hunting and exploration expeditions, like Theodore Roosevelt’s trips to Africa and the Amazon. Ernest Hemingway bought his guns there. Presidents Eisenhower and Hoover relied of A&F for the best fishing equipment. Other famous clients included Amelia Earhart, Presidents Taft, Harding, and Kennedy, the Duke of Windsor, Bing Crosby, Howard Hughes, Katharine Hepburn, Greta Garbo, and Clark Gable. During prohibition Abercrombie & Fitch was the hip place to buy flasks.
By 1928, Ezra Fitch retired from the business to enjoy the remaining few years of his life in the great outdoor he loved so much. Abercrombie & Fitch continued to grow, with stores opening up in Chicago and San Francisco. But by the late 1960’s the store hit upon hard times and went bankrupt in 1977. Oshman’s Sporting, based in Houston, Texas, bought the company. Business wasn’t good. The Limited Group bought Abercrombie & Fitch in 1988. Under the ownership of The Limited Brands, Abercrombie began to make clothing specifically designed for adolescents from wealthy, suburban families. Abercrombie grew tremendously after establishing themselves as the clothing line of choice for the “prep” clique in suburban high schools all across America. By 1999, they had 300 stores worldwide.

In 1998, Abercrombie & Fitch became a fully independent company, Separate from The Limited Brands. Soon thereafter, the company opened three other concept stores. Abercrombie Kids, Hollister, and Ruehl have helped the company expand exponentially. Abercrombie & Fitch has become one of the strongest retailers of high-quality men and women’s clothing in the United States today. Much of their success can be attributed to the well planned and executed marketing tactics they use to influence their customers.

My interest in the Abercrombie & Fitch corporation began in the summer of 2004, when my now fiancé Allison Hall took a job with the corporation. After five years of fashion design schooling from the University of Cincinnati, she became an associate designer in the Women’s Outerwear division of the corporation. I have since had many opportunities to visit the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate headquarters.

The corporate headquarters is located on the outskirts of New Albany, Ohio, which is a northeastern suburb of Columbus, Ohio. The architect of the Adirondack-inspired corporate campus, Anderson Architects of New York, meshes the style of architecture well with the style of clothing and the image the company produces. A&F’s corporate campus is sited on 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland
surroundings. There are two objectives behind introducing this multi-billion dollar corporation’s headquarters into a native Midwestern landscape. Pulling the new A&F headquarters into this natural atmosphere gives employees and visitors the seclusion and off the beaten path feelings common to a summer camp experience. The A&F campus is designed as an extension of the company’s brand. It is a place for associates to work, play, and live the Abercrombie & Fitch lifestyle. Associates who work here know it’s a fun place to work, but they are also very hard working and goal oriented. A way of life associated with casual luxury.

**PROBLEM DEFINITION:**

The intentionally isolated Abercrombie & Fitch corporate headquarters was completed in 1999. Many campus design problems and needs have become apparent over the past six years. Employees have voiced a desire for more recreational opportunities onsite. The average age of A&F employees is 29. Staying physically fit and active is an overall important issue to this group of people. However, there is currently no recreational trail system in place. Another request is the need for employees to gain access to the 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings the site has to offer. Twenty five percent of A&F employees are not from the United States. Another fifty percent of A&F employees are not from the Midwest. Only one-fourth of A&F’s nearly 1,000 corporate headquarters employees have ever had the opportunity to experience and learned from the native Midwestern landscape so prevalent to this location. This diverse, educational Midwestern landscape is underutilized because of current inaccessibility and lack of didactic programming. Associates have also voiced the need for onsite lodging for visitors, interns, and employees to be used as a short-term housing alternative. There is currently no lodging of any kind at the corporate campus. Food and other necessities would have to accompany lodging. Employees also require a conference/interviewing area. The existing cafeteria is used for these functions at the present time. Another major need of current A&F employees is an area for team building activities. These activities are required to help associates work together better in the future. The corporate structure revolves around teamwork among many departments working as a whole. These problems flesh out more issues to be tackled with the design of an onsite corporate retreat.
ASSUMPTIONS:

The Abercrombie & Fitch corporation made over two billion dollars in revenues in 2004. It is therefore to be assumed that funding for answers to the current problems stated above is not an issue. The existing corporate campus facilities cost 130 million dollars to construct. This project offers solutions to the many design needs voiced by the employees and day to day participants of the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Headquarters. The main vision and goal of this project is to teach employees and visitors about the diverse Midwestern landscape by immersing them into this 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland environment. Some of the naturalistic design elements and processes associated with this immersion are those of Jens Jensen, a designer who’s love of the Midwestern landscape inspired him to enhance and preserve “native” landscapes throughout his lifelong career. Employee engagement with the site will give opportunities for educational and recreational fulfillment. This fulfillment will strengthen the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation as a whole through elevated productivity of more positive and encouraged employees.
LITERATURE REVIEW NARRATIVE:

Retreats That Work: Designing and Conducting Effective Off-sites for Groups and Organizations. Sheila Campbell – This resource includes reasons for holding a retreat. It also provides the reader with guidelines and principles for retreat design. A whole chapter is included that deals with retreat design issues. This book caters to a teamwork type retreat experience.

The Pfeiffer Book of Successful Team-Building Tools: Best of the Annuals. Elaine Biech – A stellar panel of contributors include Julie O’Mara, Patrick Doyle, Laurence C. Porter, Robert C. Preziosi, Anthony J. Reilly, John E. Jones, Leonard D. Goodstein, and Karen Vander Linde is in this resource. A toolbox loaded with activities, surveys, and information that you can put in place to build high performing teams is included. A complete team-building kit that includes a model for determining a team’s strengths and weaknesses is in this book.

Wilderness Time: A Guide For Spiritual Retreat. Emilie Griffin - A virtual primer for retreat, this book defines the basics and provides practical tips on setting realistic expectations and on achieving the relaxation and freedom necessary for the soul to become, in the words of de Caussade, “light as a feather.”

Building Type Basics for Recreational Facilities. Richard J. Diedrich – This resource guides designers through the basics of programming, designing, and planning many types of recreational facilities, including golf and country clubhouses, tennis, aquatic, and camp support facilities. The book also features design basics for spa and fitness centers. The challenges faced by designers in creating attractive and financially viable leisure facilities is addressed and attempted to be solved through this resource.
Playing Outdoors in the Early Years.
Ros Garrick – This resource includes rational for outdoor recreational activities for childhood education and care. It also explains the place of the garden in the historical development of early childhood education. The importance of outdoor learning during the youth’s early years is essential to their positive development. This resource also lays out an outdoor curriculum for education.

Gwen Diehn – This resource contributes more than 150 nature crafts, including: wind vanes, beach baskets, bird feeders, scented soap, barometers, egg shell mosaics, etc. Much of the information provided in this book is pertinent to activities that could take place in the team building aspect of this corporate retreat.

The New Economics of Outdoor Recreation.
Hanley, Nick – This resource demonstrates ways to estimate and transfer recreational demand functions using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). It also explains evaluation of forest and park management. This book is pertinent to the team building aspect of this corporate retreat because it explains rock climbing and bouldering, which could be a programming asset to the retreat.

Constructed Wetlands in the Sustainable Landscape
Craig S. Campbell & Michael H. Ogden – This resource explains the importance and growing popularity of constructed wetlands. Constructed wetlands are increasingly being recognized as a relatively low-cost, energy-efficient, natural means of treating sewage, agricultural and industrial wastes. These wetlands are also great means of storm water runoff control while at the same time offering the potential for many other benefits. This resource was most insightful when it came to programming a constructed wetland in the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.
Wetland Plants: Biology and Ecology
J.K. Cronk – This resource is a great introduction to wetland plants associated with successful constructed wetland design. This book explains the correlation between the physical environment of wetland plants and community dynamics of plants in the wetland environment. This book was a useful tool in solving planting issues associated with constructed wetland design.

Wetlands
Ronald N. Rood - This resource is a great introduction to the ecology of the landscape known as the wetland. The book helps one understand the many kinds of plants and animals found in wetlands. This book proved to be a valuable tool to comprehending the issues related to wetland design and construction in the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.

Donald D. Cox – This resource explains the constructed wetland as an ecosystem. It portrays the types of plants that will be most beneficial to wetland processes. The book gives the reader strategies for plant survival in constructed wetlands. It also states ways to educate visitors to the benefits of constructed wetland processes.

Developing A Self-Guided Trail Brochure For the Juanita Hults Environmental Learning Center.
Kendall A. McKinnis – This resource explains the importance of proper literature to accompany the design of any trail system. It offers examples of trail guidelines and programming that are important tools to the design of the recreational and educational loop trail system to be implemented at the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Retreat.
Nature Trail Design: Considerations for Accessibility and Education.
Eric R. Sauer – This resource is a landscape architecture 5th year thesis project. It is a great tool for understanding trail systems. The goal of this project is to redesign, revitalize, and expand an existing trail system in such a way that it blends well with future use and educational objectives. It shows ways to provide access to parts of a nature preserve and woodland area without hurting these landscapes in the process. The information provided in this project links well with some of the goals and objectives associated with the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.

Rails-to-Trails: A Recreational Trail System in Southern Indiana
Kirsten L. Wheeler – This resource is a landscape architecture 5th year thesis project. It is a great tool for understanding trail systems. The project highlights important components of trail planning and layout that could make the trail system developed at the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat a very successful feature for future users and the corporation as a whole.

Trail Planning and Layout
Bryon L. Ashbaugh – This resource provides valuable insight into the planning and layout of successful trail systems. This information is used to design the recreational loop trail network at the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.

The Big Book of Team Building Games: Trust-Building Activities, Team Spirit Exercises, and Other Fun Things to do.
John W. Newstrom – This resource provides many guidelines for planning and layout for team building activities courses. These activities are relevant to the team building course to be developed at the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.
Indoor/Outdoor Team Building Games for Trainers: Powerful Activities From the World of Adventure Based Team Building and Ropes Courses.

Harrison Snow – This resource is a valuable tool when it comes to the programming and design for the team building course at the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat. The concepts and activities portrayed within the book could be embraced and expanded upon to create a positive team building experience for users.

Parking Spaces: A Design, Implementation, and Use Manual for Architects, Planners, and Engineers. Mark C. Childs – This resource is a unique combination of design principles and creative inspiration. This guidebook shows designers how to create compelling spaces that meet existing parking needs. The author motivates designers to stretch the limits of traditional asphalt wastelands with landscaping innovations. The ideas of turning huge parking lots into small “parking rooms” meet with the programming requirements for the redesigned parking facility at the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.

Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens (Creating the North American Landscape.) Robert E. Grese – This resource draws on Jensen’s writings and plans to analyze his projects, presenting a clear picture of Jensen’s efforts to enhance and preserve “native” landscapes. This book explains Jensen’s love for the Midwestern landscape. The information within helps create a basis for some of the design principles established within the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat.

Barns

Nicholas S. Howe – This resource is filled with wonderful pictures and structural portrayals of Midwestern barns. The structures to be designed for the Abercrombie & Fitch corporate retreat mimic many of the ideas and principles established in the architecture of historic Midwestern barns. This is an important way to tie the native landscape into the newly designed retreat.
SITE SETTING:

The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Campus is located in Franklin County, Ohio. Within Franklin County is located the capital of Ohio since 1812, Columbus. The city of Columbus has grown into the most populated city in the state with over three quarters of a million residents. The corporate campus is located in the northeastern corner of the county. Just northeast of a growing suburb, New Albany. The site takes advantage of the relatively undeveloped woodland region. Abercrombie & Fitch’s parent company, The Limited Brands, is located just five miles to the southwest of the campus in a much more commercialized area of Franklin County.

Figure 5 – Ohio counties map
Figure 6 – Franklin County, Ohio
Figure 7 – A&F corp. location map
SITE CONTEXT:

The A&F site is located to the northwest of New Albany, Ohio. New development threatens to expand towards the site from the west. A private country club is located to the south of the A&F site, across State Road 161. Several small ranch style homes are located along the roads adjacent to the site.

This graphic portrays the position of the A&F campus as compared to the suburb of New Albany, Ohio. It also compares the amount of residential developments surrounding the site to the amount of undeveloped agricultural land in the vicinity.
The Abercrombie & Fitch corporate headquarters is approximately 580 acres in area. Before the headquarters was built in 1999, the site covered mainly with native woodland. Two large areas on the southern portion of the site, and two small areas on the northern portion of the site were agricultural fields. Two creeks intersect on the west central portion of the site. Today the southern agricultural fields have been developed into a grassland prairie and a 750,000 square foot distribution center. Most of the northern part of the site is covered by the A&F design center and parking for these facilities. Fitch Path Rd. winds its way through the site. A woodland buffer helps to seclude the entire site.
PROJECT REQUIREMENTS:

The following few pages consist of various project necessities and requirements that fall under the heading of Project Requirements in this publication. These requirements are project goals and objectives, site issues, client description and their goals, assumptions, and limitations.

PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Through many meetings and interviews with employees of the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus a lengthy program of needs has been compiled. This project’s goal is to answer those needs with the design of a corporate retreat experience. The following list of goals and objectives will be expanded upon in the project’s program section of this book.

- The introduction of more recreational activities to the corporate campus is a major goal of this project. Some of these activities would include recreational trail systems, disc golf opportunities, and climbing wall facilities.

- The opportunity for employees to gain access to the 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings the site has to offer is another major goal of this project.

- The enhancement and protection of this native Midwestern landscape is another goal of this project. The newly gained access to the natural environment should not destroy the site or its current theme of seclusion.

- Another important goal of this project is provide information for users to supplement their educational experience in the natural setting. Interpretive areas located in the woodland, prairie, and wetland environments will help users learn about these Midwestern landscapes.

- The final main objective of this project is to answer all other A&F employee requests through design of a corporate retreat cluster. This cluster of facilities must maintain a isolated theme.
SITE ISSUES:

Many issues and constraints come to the surface when one looks at this 580 acre site in more detail. The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus is intentionally secluded from outside influences and distractions by a thick woodland buffer. The corporation will undoubtedly try to keep this private ideal intact in the future. To achieve this connections to surrounding positive features, such as bike trails, greenways, and parks would be frowned upon. A lack of connections to outside strengths could be considered a weakness to the overall design, but the client’s wishes must be respected in this situation.

The current site is approximately 580 acres in size. Expansion to the south is not an option due to the location of Smith’s Mill Road. Expansion to the west is blocked by Blacklick Creek, which makes up the entire western border of the site. Expansion to the north is impeded by already established private residencies. The campus could expand to east in the future if local private land owners would be willing to sell the land to Abercrombie & Fitch. The issue of expansion doesn’t seem pressing at the current time, but future Company growth and success could lead to new development as a necessity.

Other more physical issues related to the site arise. Two creeks come together within the site. Blacklick Creek and Haines Creek flow southward through the site. There location results in plenty of topography change within the site. Recreational trail planning and positioning must play particularly good attention to this topography when being implemented. The existing flat locations onsite must be looked upon for the location of retreat facilities. A relatively large flat area is located towards the southern boundary of the site.

The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus already has enough surface parking to handle the vehicles of nearly 1,000 employees. Half of these parking facilities have been designed to accentuate and take advantage of the woodland landscape available onsite. The other half of the parking, the parking associated with the distribution center, is purely functional. These facilities consist of large surface lots. This unsightly waste of resources is an issue that should be addressed in the designs of this project.
CLIENT DESCRIPTION & THEIR GOALS:

The client for this project is the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation. The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation is a specialty clothing retailer that caters to a college age demographic. Their corporate headquarters is located on 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings. There are two objectives behind introducing this multi-billion dollar corporation’s headquarters into a native Midwestern landscape. Pulling the new A&F headquarters into this natural atmosphere gives employees and visitors the seclusion and off the beaten path feelings common to a summer camp experience. The A&F campus is designed as an extension of the company’s brand. It is a place for associates to work, play, and live the Abercrombie & Fitch lifestyle. A way of life associated with casual luxury.

Abercrombie & Fitch’s goals are discussed and met through the completion of this project. They include, among other needs, more recreational opportunities onsite, access to the 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings, and the provision of information for users to supplement their educational experience in these natural setting.

USER:

The users of this completed corporate retreat project will be the employees, and visitors of the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation. The corporation’s attitude of seclusion will limit the users of the retreat site to these two groups.
ASSUMPTIONS:

The Abercrombie & Fitch corporation made over two billion dollars in revenues in 2004. It is therefore to be assumed that funding for answers to the current problems stated above is not an issue. The existing corporate campus facilities cost 130 million dollars to construct. This project offers solutions to the many design needs voiced by the employees and day to day participants of the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Headquarters. The main vision and goal of this project is to teach employees and visitors about the diverse Midwestern landscape by immersing them into this 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland environment. Some of the naturalistic design elements and processes associated with this immersion are those of Jens Jensen, a designer who’s love of the Midwestern landscape inspired him to enhance and preserve “native” landscapes throughout his lifelong career. Employee engagement with the site will give opportunities for educational and recreational fulfillment. This fulfillment will strengthen the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation as a whole through elevated productivity of more positive and encouraged employees.
LIMITATIONS:

The limitations associated with this project include the destruction of the woodland buffer that currently surrounds the site and gives it a secluded feeling. This buffer must stay intact. Expansion outside the established property line is only possible to the east of the site. This limitation will effect future growth.
PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

The programming requirements for this corporate retreat come almost directly from the needs and desires of Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Headquarters employees. The final design and implementation of this extensive list of requirements will create an experience that answers all of the current needs of employees.

- A lodging structure is a major requirement for this corporate retreat project. There are currently no lodging facilities on the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus. It should house up to forty people at any given time. There are ten modest single occupant apartments and fifteen suites, which would comfortably house two people. These twenty-five apartments will be housed in one large facility, no more than two stories tall. The structure is to be designed to lodge employees, potential employees, visitors and temporary interns and employees who in need of short-term housing. The structure’s architecture should reflect the thoughts and ideals of Jens Jensen whenever possible. The building materials should be of a natural Midwestern quality, such as native limestone, exposed timber, and roofing materials reminiscent to the corrugated steel so prevalent in barns and agricultural facilities in the Midwest. The structure should be secluded and not directly viewable from Fitch Path Road. This structure will be the largest and most dominant of the four new facilities to make up the new corporate retreat. Exterior windows should be positioned to collect light and brighten the structure’s interior spaces. This facility will be located in a dense woodland environment, so designing the structure to take advantage of any lighting it receives will be crucial. A supply access road should connect the lodging facility to Fitch Path Road. This road is to be positioned so that visitors will not come into contact with it on a regular basis. The entry to the lodge and the rest of the retreat will be a planned hike through the native Midwestern woodland landscape.

- A conference/ interview structure is another major requirement for this corporate retreat project. This facility will answer the current needs of A&F employees. The existing corporate headquarters lacks proper conference and interview facilities. Every month there is a conference held for Abercrombie & Fitch store managers at the headquarters. There over 500 managers in attendance. The meetings are held outside in the summer, and
packed into the headquarters cafeteria facility during the winter months. This causes scheduling conflicts with employees trying to receive normal lunches. The need for separate onsite conference facilities has been voiced. There is also a need for formal interviewing facilities onsite. All interviews for positions are currently held in the headquarters cafeteria building. Interviews are held at long wooden cafeteria tables. This makes them informal and very unprofessional. The need has arisen for facilities specially dedicated to prospective employee interviews. The new structure should be located in a cluster with other new retreat facilities. The structure should be secluded and not directly viewable from Fitch Path Road. The exterior architecture of the facility should mesh well with the designs of the other four retreat facilities. The facility should be no more than two stories in height. The building materials should be of a natural Midwestern quality, such as native limestone, exposed timber, and roofing materials reminiscent to the corrugated steel so prevalent in barns and agricultural facilities in the Midwest. This facility will be located in a dense woodland environment, so designing the structure to take advantage of any lighting it receives will be crucial. The interior space will consist of three large conference rooms that will have walls that can be removed, making the space one large conference room. The room will hold approximately 500 people when it is in this configuration. The rest of the conference/interview facility will be filled with many small interviewing rooms. These rooms will be much more intimate and professional than the hard wood benches of the A&F headquarters cafeteria building.

The third major structure in the set of four new facilities that will make up the retreat cluster is a cafeteria/market building. A place for people to eat who are staying in the lodge, using the conference/interview facilities, and general retreat users is a necessity. This new building will be smaller than the previously described lodging and conference/interview facilities. The facility will be only one story tall, but the roof will be quite elevated over the large open interior eating area. The structure’s architecture should reflect the thoughts and ideals of Jens Jensen whenever possible. The building materials should be of a natural Midwestern quality, such as native limestone, exposed timber, and roofing materials reminiscent to the corrugated steel so prevalent in barns and agricultural facilities in the Midwest. This facility will be located in a dense woodland environment, so designing the structure to take advantage of any lighting it receives will be crucial. The structure should be secluded and not directly viewable from Fitch Path Road.
The interior space of the building should be made up of four major spaces. The largest space will be dedicated to eating. Nearly 100 people will be able to sit in the space and enjoy a meal at any given time. A large and well stocked kitchen area will be behind the scenes. A small but efficient market will be located within the facility. People staying in the lodging facility have the market at their disposal to purchase any necessities they might need while they are staying there. Restrooms will fill the rest of the space inside this building. The cafeteria/market structure will be services by the same access road as the lodge.

The fourth and final new building in the set of new facilities that will make up the retreat cluster is a wetland interpretive center. This structure will be located close to a constructed wetland. This wetland will be in close proximity to the lodging, conference/interview, and cafeteria/ market facilities that make up the new retreat cluster. The building will be one story in height. The structure’s architecture should reflect the thoughts and ideals of Jens Jensen whenever possible. The building materials should be of a natural Midwestern quality, such as native limestone, exposed timber, and roofing materials reminiscent to the corrugated steel so prevalent in barns and agricultural facilities in the Midwest. This facility will be located in a dense woodland environment, so designing the structure to take advantage of any lighting it receives will be crucial. The structure should be secluded and not directly viewable from Fitch Path Road. The small wetland interpretive center will teach visitors the importance of responsible water usage and pollution disposal. It will also expose visitors to a variety of wetland vegetation. The one acre constructed wetland adjacent to the facility will be responsible for purifying precipitation run-off from all of the retreat structures and hardscape. The water will be purified through natural processes, and then travel to Haines Ditch and Blacklick Creek pollutant free and responsibly. Literature and signage inside the facility will educate visitors of this process.

The new parking facilities for the A&F Corporate Retreat should be able to hold around 100 vehicles at any given time. The parking area should be located out of site of the retreat cluster. This parking area will be the first of many experiences a visitor to the retreat will enjoy. The rows of spaces will be separated by large areas of dense vegetation. This will create parking “rooms” as opposed to traditional huge asphalt surface lots. A small portion of the parking facilities will be dedicated to a small fleet of hybrid vehicles. The vehicles will
be available for retreat patrons to use to explore Columbus, Ohio and the surround area. The vehicles will be available to rent by employees as well. Ten to fifteen of these environmentally sensitive vehicles will be onsite at any given time. The need for this programming element was specifically expressed by many current A&F employees.

- A number of mixed-use recreational and educational trails will be available to A&F corporate employees and retreat visitors alike. 10 trail loops across the 580 acre site are proposed. Uses include running, rollerblading, walking, biking, and nature viewing. The trails will be well maintained and accessible an average of nine months per year. Trail materials have been selected to give the user the best overall experience possible while enjoying the trails. These materials include asphalt, wooden boardwalk, compacted gravel, and concrete. These materials are pictured below. Nearly 80% of the trail’s surface will be covered with asphalt or concrete. The wooden boardwalk material will be used in places where topography is too steep for surface materials and a slight elevation is required.

Compacted gravel will be used in areas leading to Midwestern landscape interpretive centers. This will indicate to the trail user that these portions of the trail do not complete a loop and will dead end. Interpretive centers will be located throughout the site in the native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings. Interpretive signage will be prevalent at these locations. The signage will be designed to be informative and aesthetic at the same time. A didactic landscape needs much rich signage in order to allow users access to the total learning experience available.

The trail loops will be designed to allow trail users a number of different landscape sightseeing experiences while on any given loop. There will also be a range of different experiences between all trail loops. The trail loops have also been designed to allow specific distances to be traveled in specific time periods. This allows users the knowledge of how far they are about to travel of a trail loop, and it helps users know how long it will take them to complete that specific trail loop. Signage stating these figures will be posted throughout the site. This information will also be available in a brochure format.
Each trail loop will be given its own name. The naming process could be undertaken by employees who will be using the trail loops often. They would experience the trails, and be able to come up with imaginative names like “The Terrific Tour” or the “Amazing Experience” or simply “Jim’s Favorite.” This will give employees a sense of pride to know that they are naming their favorite recreational and educational trails.

To enhance the amount of recreational activities available to A&F employees and retreat visitors a disc golf course will be designed as a programming element. The disc golf course will be located in the same dense woodland as the retreat cluster. This course will be comprised of six to nine holes. A regular course has eighteen holes, but six to nine is enough to get visitors feet wet. This course will have a limited impact on the woodland it is located in. The trees that will have to be cleared for the construction of this course will be very few to none. The entire six to nine hole course will fit onto between three to six acres of land. The course will be located in such a way that viewing it from Fitch Path Road or Smith’s Mill Road will be impossible.

Another major programming element voiced by many A&F employees is the development of an outdoor team building course. The course will be designed to help employees strive to be better designers and work more positively with teammates in the future. Many stations along a trail located in the dense woodland will allow for many team building experiences for users. The course will be located in close proximity to the retreat facilities cluster, but will not be viewable from that location. Seclusion is key to the success of these activities.
DESIGN PROCESS:

The following section deals with the design process involved with the completion of this project. The section also includes a site base map, site inventory images, site analysis images, and design concepts with supporting text. A better understanding of the project site and the project’s design goals should be acquired through the development of this portion of the publication. The design process went as follows:

- **Fall 2004**: Research was accumulated that regarded the actual project site. Trips were made to the site in an attempt to fully understand it. The site was experienced through walking tours. Design professionals and natural resource professionals helped determine strengths and weaknesses of the landscape. Ideas were offered as to how the site could be managed and experienced more positively in the future. Literature that pertained to issues prevalent to the site was examined and reviewed. Bits and pieces that were useful to establishing solutions to site issues were collected as future resources. A tentative program was established for project needs. Interviews were held with A&F employees regarding their overall views of their working environment and how it could be improved upon. Case studies relevant to the project were studied to help in the overall understanding of the project scope. The region in which the site is located was studied to see how this project could be affected by surrounding influences. The project scope was defined tentatively. All of this information was compiled and published in outline form.

- **Spring 2005**: The spring semester was dedicated to taking all of the raw data accumulated through research during the fall semester and formalizing it. This information was then added to much new project information including: project introduction, site inventory and analysis, project opportunities and constraints, an abstract vision statement, project goals and objectives, a formalized program matrix, case studies, project planning considerations and assumptions, the establishment of a definition for the client and project users, site design concepts, schematic master plan, final master plan, and a study of a detailed area of the site. This study included a master plan and other perspectives of the project area. Design development guidance was received throughout the semester from professor Anne Hoover and my project advisor professor Chris Marlow.
The 580 acre A&F Corporate Headquarters site is covered with many natural and built features. The natural site amenities include native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland environments. The built features on-site include large distribution center and its parking located to the southeast of the site, the A&F design buildings and its parking facilities located to the north of the site, and the main access road to the site, Fitch Path Road. Blacklick Creek makes up the western boarder of the site. Smith’s Mill Road creates the southern border of the site. Agricultural land borders the site to the east. Independent residencies border the site to the north. Additional parking is being built to the north of the site in this image.
SITE INVENTORY:

The following pages include site inventory maps and text. They also include many site photographs to give the reader a more thorough understanding of the site and its contents.

- **Property Line:**
  (The site covers 350 acres of forest, prairie, creekbeds, and constructed elements. The site is bordered to the south by Saw Mill Road. It is bordered to the west by Black Lick Creek. To the North by private residencies, and to the east by private agricultural land.)

- **Topography:**
  (The site would be relatively flat if it weren’t for Black Lick Creek and its tributaries. The highest part of the site is at the southeast border. The site drops along the waterways to the lowest part at the southwest corner of the site. A total 25 ft. drop in all.)

- **Fitch Path Road:**
  (The lone entry road into the site is Fitch Path Road. It is paved and two lanes wide. It curves its way through forest and constructed prairie towards the distribution center and design buildings.)

- **Parking:**
  (There are four parking lots spread throughout the corporate campus. Three serve the distribution center and 1 very aesthetic paved lot serves the corporate design headquarters.)

- **Distribution Center:**
  (This large facility handles all retail material and ships it nationally to Abercrombie & Fitch stores.)

- **Design Buildings:**
  (The seven structures that make up the design headquarters is secluded and circled by forest.)

Figure 15 – Site Inventory 1
-Creeks/Ponds:
(Black Lick Creek runs from north to south through the site. Many small ponds and tributaries give the site character in terms of landform. Abercrombie & Fitch has also developed some 6 acres of wetland designed to mitigate wetland and stream impact.)

-Planned Prairie:
(A large agricultural field at the south end of the site was turned into a constructed prairie filled with grasses and wildflowers. The prairie is surrounded by forest. It remains unseen from Fitch path because of a large berm. Two other locations, to the north and south of the distribution center, have also been developed as constructed prairie. There are currently no trails or pathways through the prairie type environment.)

-Forest:
(The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate Campus is covered by much dense woodland. The site was chosen by Anderson Architects in 1998 for exactly this reason. The Abercrombie & Fitch image can be defined as rustic. The wooded setting of their corporate campus fuels this image. Roughly 40% of the 350 acre campus is covered with forest. There are currently no trails leading through any of these woods except a boardwalk at the design center's main entrance. The design headquarters is very well hidden from view by this dense forest. Many of the trees and other plants located in Abercrombie & Fitch property are very common to the midwest. There is also a wide range of wildlife living in this natural environment.)
The landscape character section below helps the viewer understand the change in topography across the site. The image also gives a picture as to the location of roads and facilities in relationship to the natural elements on the site. The diversity of deciduous tree the site is blessed with is pictured as well.

Figure 17 – Site in relationship to character section A

Figure 18 – Existing landscape section A
The landscape character section below helps the viewer understand the change in topography across the site. The image also gives a picture as to the location of roads and facilities in relationship to the natural elements on the site. The diversity of deciduous trees the site is blessed with is pictured as well.

Figure 19 – Site in relationship to character section B

Figure 20 – Existing landscape section B
SITE PHOTOGRAPHS:

The following inventory includes photographs of natural and built features on the site as well as site aerial photographs to show the locations of these photographs. This section should help the reader better understand what the site looked like during the fall and winter months of 2004/2005.
Figure 24 – A&F corporate campus site map
Figure 25 – A&F Distribution Center
Figure 26 – Smith’s Mill Road
Figure 27 - A&F Distribution Center
Figure 28 – A&F corporate campus site map

Figure 29 – View northward from Smith’s Mill Road

Figure 30 – Fitch Path Road driving southward

Figure 31 – Constructed grassland prairie
Figure 32 – A&F corporate site map

Figure 33 – View of design building from Fitch Path Rd.

Figure 34 – View of parking from Fitch Path Road

Figure 35 – View of “parking room” concept
Figure 36 – A&F corporate site map

Figure 37 – A&F design headquarters cafeteria

Figure 38 – Design headqtrs. Boardwalk entrance

Figure 39 – A&F existing design headquarters
Figure 40 – A&F corporate site map

Figure 41 – A&F design headquarters bldg.

Figure 42 – A&F design headquarters cafeteria

Figure 43 – A&F existing design headquarters bldg.
Figure 44 – A&F corporate site map

Figure 45 – Northward on Kitzmiller Road

Figure 46 – Typical home on Kitzmiller Road

Figure 47 – A&F northern supply access road
SITE ANALYSIS:

- A woodland buffer around the site must be preserved in order for the site to maintain a feeling of seclusion.
- The entrance to the site is not overly visible to motorists driving by. There is no large sign telling of a multi-billion dollar corporation. The idea of a subtle entrance works well and should remain in the future.
- The entrance to the Distribution Center is functional and works very well. The Distribution Center is not currently visible from Fitch Path Road. Buffer should continue to block these views in the future.
- A pedestrian connection between the design headquarters and the distribution center is not available at this time. Future connection should be made.
- The A&F Design headquarters and its parking are very well designed. They fill the northern part of the site. No other substantial features should be placed in the northern part of the A&F Corporate campus.

Figure 48 – A&F Corporate campus current site analysis
Opportunities: There is adequate space for the development of a corporate retreat and all of the programming necessities that would go along with it. The 580 acre site offers many great opportunities for A&F employees to enjoy recreational activities. The site also offers a great landscape to show other corporations the positive effect a corporate retreat would have on their own employees. Abercrombie & Fitch could be a leader in “green campus” design, much like they have become a leader in the retail clothing industry.

Constraints: The Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus is intentionally secluded from outside influences and distractions by a thick woodland buffer. The corporation will undoubtedly try to keep this private ideal intact in the future. To achieve this connections to surrounding positive features, such as bike trails, greenways, and parks would be frowned upon. A lack of connections to outside strengths could be considered a weakness to the overall design, but the client’s wishes must be respected in this situation. The current site is approximately 580 acres in size. The issue of expansion doesn’t seem pressing at the current time, but future company growth and success could lead to new development as a necessity.
CONCEPT 1:

○ **Strengths:**
  Multiple loops in the trail system will create many positive experiences for trail users. Interprative areas are positioned in all three landscape environments: woodland, prairie, and wetland. The actual retreat facilities are buffered from view by vehicles on Fitch Path Road. This location also limits impact on the woodland and prairie by being positioned between the two.

○ **Weaknesses:**
  The disc golf course is spread out all over the site. This would cause much negative impact on the woodland environment. The southern half of the site is seems cramped and overdeveloped. The development on the southern half of the site bisects the prairie environment. This would destroy the native landscape character of the space. The addition of parking should be located away from the retreat cluster.
CONCEPT 2:

○ **Strengths:**
  This concept offers limited intrusion into the existing woodland, prairie, and wetland landscape environments. The trail system connects with the existing A&F design headquarters. The placement of retreat structures on the edge of multiple landscape areas limits their destruction. The trail system crosses Fitch Path Road only 3 times. This limits the times users see the roads, and keeps the overall character of the experience much more natural.

○ **Weaknesses:**
  The trail systems only create two loops around the site. Additional experiences would benefit users. The prairie environment is only viewed from its exterior. The area could be enjoyed more from an interpretive site located within the prairie landscape. Two new roads and parking lots are required in this concept. The destruction of the natural landscape from this new construction hurts the overall design.
MASTER PLAN:

The details and supporting text for this graphic are located in the Programming Requirements section of this publication. They are located on pages 21 – 25. To repeat them at this point would be repetitive and unnecessary. The following graphic is generally labeled to explain features represented in the plan.
Figure 52 – A&F Corp. retreat masterplan
AREA STUDY:

The final phase of this project was to zoom in on a small portion of the site and provide more thorough design drawings for that detailed study area. The following section of this publication consists of the drawings and text explaining the area chosen and how it works. The plan view that follows shows the actual corporate retreat cluster, redesigned parking, recreational and educational trail loops, the wetland interpretive center and adjacent wetland, the location of the disc golf course, and the location of the team building course. These retreat programming items were introduced earlier in the text. Additional text will be added to reestablish this information.
A lodging structure is a major requirement for this corporate retreat project. There are currently no lodging facilities on the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate campus. It should house up to forty people at any given time. There are ten modest single occupant apartments and fifteen suites, which would comfortably house two people. These twenty-five apartments will be housed in one large facility, no more than two stories tall. The structure is to be designed to lodge employees, potential employees, visitors and temporary interns and employees who in need of short-term housing. The structure’s architecture should reflect the thoughts and ideals of Jens Jensen whenever possible. The building materials should be of a natural Midwestern quality, such as native limestone, exposed timber, and roofing materials reminiscent to the corrugated steel so prevalent in barns and agricultural facilities in the Midwest. The structure should be secluded and not directly viewable from Fitch Path Road. This structure will be the largest and most dominant of the four new facilities to make up the new corporate retreat. Exterior windows should be positioned to collect light and brighten the structure’s interior spaces. This facility will be located in a dense woodland environment, so designing the structure to take advantage of any lighting it receives will be crucial. A supply access road should connect the lodging facility to Fitch Path Road. This road is to be positioned so that visitors will not come into contact with it on a regular basis. The entry to the lodge and the rest of the retreat will be a planned hike through the native Midwestern woodland landscape.

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been selected to give the user the best overall experience possible while enjoying the trails. These materials include asphalt, wooden boardwalk, compacted gravel, and concrete. These materials are pictured below. Nearly 80% of the trail’s surface will be covered with asphalt or concrete. The wooden boardwalk material will be used in places where topography is too steep for surface materials and a slight elevation is required.

Compacted gravel will be used in areas leading to Midwestern landscape interpretive centers. This will indicate to the trail user that these portions of the trail do not complete a loop and will dead end. Interpretive centers will be located throughout the site in the native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland surroundings. Interpretive signage will be prevalent at these locations. The signage will be designed to be informative and aesthetic at the same time. A didactic landscape needs much rich signage in order to allow users access to the total learning experience available.

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Each trail loop will be given its own name. The naming process could be undertaken by Employees who will be using the trail loops often. They would experience the trails, and be able to come up with imaginative names like “The Terrific Tour” or the “Amazing Experience” or simply “Jim’s Favorite.” This will give employees a sense of pride to know that they are naming their favorite recreational and educational trails.

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RETREAT CLUSTER PERSPECTIVES:

The following images and supporting text place the reader into the retreat space. The perspective drawings are from many positions and angles. These views into the retreat cluster help paint the picture in one’s mind, and bridge the gap between an original idea, and an entire semester’s work.
Figure 54 – Birds-eye-view of the proposed Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate retreat cluster (view from the east)
Figure 55 – Birds-eye-view of the proposed Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate retreat cluster (view from the southwest)
Figure 56 – Birds-eye-view of the proposed Abercrombie & Fitch Corporate retreat cluster (view from the Northwest)
Figure 57 – View of A&F Corporate retreat cluster central open space (view eastward from the cafeteria roof)
Figure 58 – View into the retreat central open space and central council ring from eastern entry path.
Figure 59 – View of the lodge facility from the pathway to the wetland interpretive center.
Figure 60 – View of the A&F retreat central open space and the council ring area from the lodge entrance
Figure 61 – Birds-eye-view of the A&F retreat cafeteria and central open space. (view from the east)
Figure 62 – Birds-eye-view of the A&F retreat parking “rooms”. (View from the southeast)
Figure 63 – Birds-eye-view of the A&F retreat wetland interpretive center and adjacent constructed wetland.

Figure 64 – A typical signage detail from the entry path into the A&F corporate retreat from the redesigned parking facilities.
CONCLUSION:

Through the completion of this endeavor, it has been interesting to see the results of this “five year” project. The incorporation of many design elements acquired over the past few years and the use of research on this project has proven to be vital pieces in the puzzle that is my continuing education in the field of landscape architecture. The A&F Corporate headquarters site held many of the elements necessary for the development of a corporate retreat. A retreat experience that takes advantage of this 580 acres of native woodland, constructed prairie grassland, and wetland environment. In Jens Jensen’s words “art must come from within, and the only source from which the art of landscaping can come is our native landscape. It cannot be imported from foreign shores and be our own.” Employee engagement with the site will give opportunities for educational and recreational fulfillment. This fulfillment will strengthen the Abercrombie & Fitch Corporation as a whole through elevated productivity of more positive and encouraged employees in the future.
The literary sources listed below were not all specifically sited throughout this body of text. However, they were important pieces of literature in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding regarding the design elements incorporated into this project.

Literary References:


Hyatt, Gary M. (1973). *Preferences for recreation facilities of rustic-design as compared with Modern design.* [Microfilm].


