

**Montego Bay, Jamaica: Renewal of the Past
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Figure 1: Photo depicting workers from 1872 in a colonial plantation in Jamaica

COLONIAL HISTORY

Jamaica as a country has undergone many influences throughout her history. Jamaica's history speaks to experiences of hardships and prosperities and prosperity; and the growth and determination of a people .

Jamaica has an extensive history before the present tourist place as well as colonial history. The original inhabitants of Jamaica are believed to be Arawaks, also called Tainos. They came from South America 2,500 years ago and named the island Xaymaca, which meant "land of wood and water". The Arawaks were a mild and simple people by nature. Physically, they were light brown in colour, short and well-shaped with coarse, black hair.

In the original land of the island, the possibilities of farming were favorable. The original inhabitants survived on growing crops such as sweet potatoes, maize, fruits, vegetable, cottons and tobacco. They built their villages all over the island but most of them settled on the coasts and near rivers as they ate fishes as a source of proteins which was part of their main diet.

The peaceful time for the Arawaks was disrupted in 1494 when Columbus landed his foot on the islands with the Spaniards. Since then the Spanish took control over the original inhabitants and the extreme treatments to them lead to a gradual annihilation of the indigenous people of the islands.

The history of sugar plantation and slave trading effectively takes place when Jamaica becomes a colony of Britain in 1655 when English army took over the land from the Spaniards. The English settlers concerned themselves with growing crops that could easily be sold to England such as sugar, giving rise to rapid increase in the sugar industry which increase to roughly 450 sugar estates across the island by 1739. Enslaved African slaves filled the large labor force required for the sugar industry. The colonists were surprised by the performance and efficiency of the labor and continue to ship Africans to the West Indies to be sold to planters who forced them to work on sugar plantations.

Jamaica was under the rule of English colony until 1962 which is the moment the Jamaican Constitution which was the very first legal document that provided freedom, rights and privileges to the citizens of Jamaica. The Constitution reflects the country's independence as a nation's state and to this very day, remainst the foundation to the island's legal systems and institutions.



Figure 2: Photo depicting the first newsprint on the independence of Jamaica on 1962.

The Constitution took effect on August 6, 1962 when Jamaica gained political independence from Britain, after more than 300 years of British colonial rule. While being the first constitution for the politically independent nation, it was not the first legal framework for the island. Following Emancipation in 1834, black Jamaicans struggled against the harsh realities of being a colony of Britain and their dissent grew louder in the 1930s. In 1938 a royal commission was appointed to investigate the working conditions as well as other political and social conditions that were affecting

the society. The investigations and reports led to the crafting and adoption of a new constitution on November 20, 1944 which ensured universal franchise for all Jamaicans regardless of race and class. By the 1950s there was a growing urgency and push for political independence as well as a burst of nascent nationalism across the British Caribbean territories. Afterwards, Jamaica began to push for its own independence and, from 1961 through 1962, a joint committee of the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council worked to draft the Jamaican Constitution. It was approved by the United Kingdom and included as the Second Schedule of the Jamaica Order in Council, 1962 under the West Indies Act, 1962. The Constitution came into force with the Jamaica Independence Act, 1962 which granted Jamaica political independence.

POST COLONIAL JAMAICA (20TH - EARLY 21ST CENTURY)

With the effective withdrawal of the English colony, Jamaica as a country celebrated its independence but soon after faced the reality of surviving in the capitalistic economy of the world as a small island in the Caribbean region.

As the English colony retreated themselves out of the island, they also retrieved their assets with them back to mainland. This caused an initial struggle on the inhabitants of the islands as they did not have the necessary manpower or knowledge to continue on the economy driven by the colonial power. Hence, the Jamaican government used its tropical climate as an advantage and put forth tourism as the start of the island's driving force for its economy.

TOURISM CULTURE



Figure 3: Photo depicting a hotel resort situated in Montego Bay tourist region

For Jamaica, as well as other Caribbean Islands, Tourism was one of the brightest spots of the economy in the late 20th century other than bauxite output which was deemed to be a declining economy with non sustainable tactic. Jamaica's appeal to tourists derived from its natural scenic beauties, warm climate and white and sandy beaches as well as the welcomeness of the local residents. The island's proximity of the North American tourist

market was also a huge advantage in the beginning of the country's reconstruction towards tourism oriented economy.

Many tactics were deployed to enchant more number of tourists to the islands. The Jamaican government incorporated extensive methods of advertisements and campaigns including postcards depicting the constructed resorts and sandy beaches. Moreover, the coasts of the islands were constructed to be stopovers for cruises passing through the Caribbeans, attempting to spur foreign tourism development and investing in the early 1980s. The continuous effort to promote the island as a tropical getaway became a huge success in increasing the overall economy of Jamaica in the late 20th century till the early 21st century.

Jamaica recorded 846,716 visitor arrivals in 1985. Stop-over visitors numbered 571,713 and cruise ship passengers totalled 261,508. Some 13,495 servicemen also visited the island, many of whom were United States soldiers from the naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Ninety percent of all tourists in Jamaica originated in North America, with about 75 percent coming from the United States. Europeans and Latin Americans made up the remaining 10 percent. Canadians and Europeans tended to stay longer than Americans, whose average stay was roughly one week. Although Jamaican citizens received discounted hotel rates, costs remained too high for most Jamaicans.

Jamaican tourism was quite diversified, ranging from camping in the Blue Mountains, to small beach houses in Negril, to large tourist hotels in Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. The country's room capacity exceeded 11,000 rooms, served by over 700 hotels and various other guest houses. Most large hotels were foreign owned, whereas the majority of smaller hotels were locally owned. In the 1980s, the government divested numerous hotels that were purchased by the government in the 1970s.

BYPRODUCT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY

Despite the enormous amount of contribution by the tourism industry to the Jamaica economy for the past 50 years. The issue of sustainability of the industry is crucial to scrutinize.

One of the alarming side effects of Caribbean tourism industry is that the very nature of the mechanism of the industry works in such a way that it is only successful because of the construction of a tourist perception of the islands in the Caribbean regions. This means that the majority of the tourists visit Jamaica for its hotels and resorts with the warmth and beaches. This has been a problematic issue for the country as the influx of the tourists are centered around these small parts of the islands which effectively seclude other industries and residents to be part of the tourism economy to make profits as well. Furthermore, the profits that are actually being made by the locals of the country are proportionally smaller as most of the profits are diverted to the foreign investors that fund the developments of these resorts and hotels. Hence the profits made by the locals are only primarily comprised of the manual workforce required to maintain the facilities for the tourists.

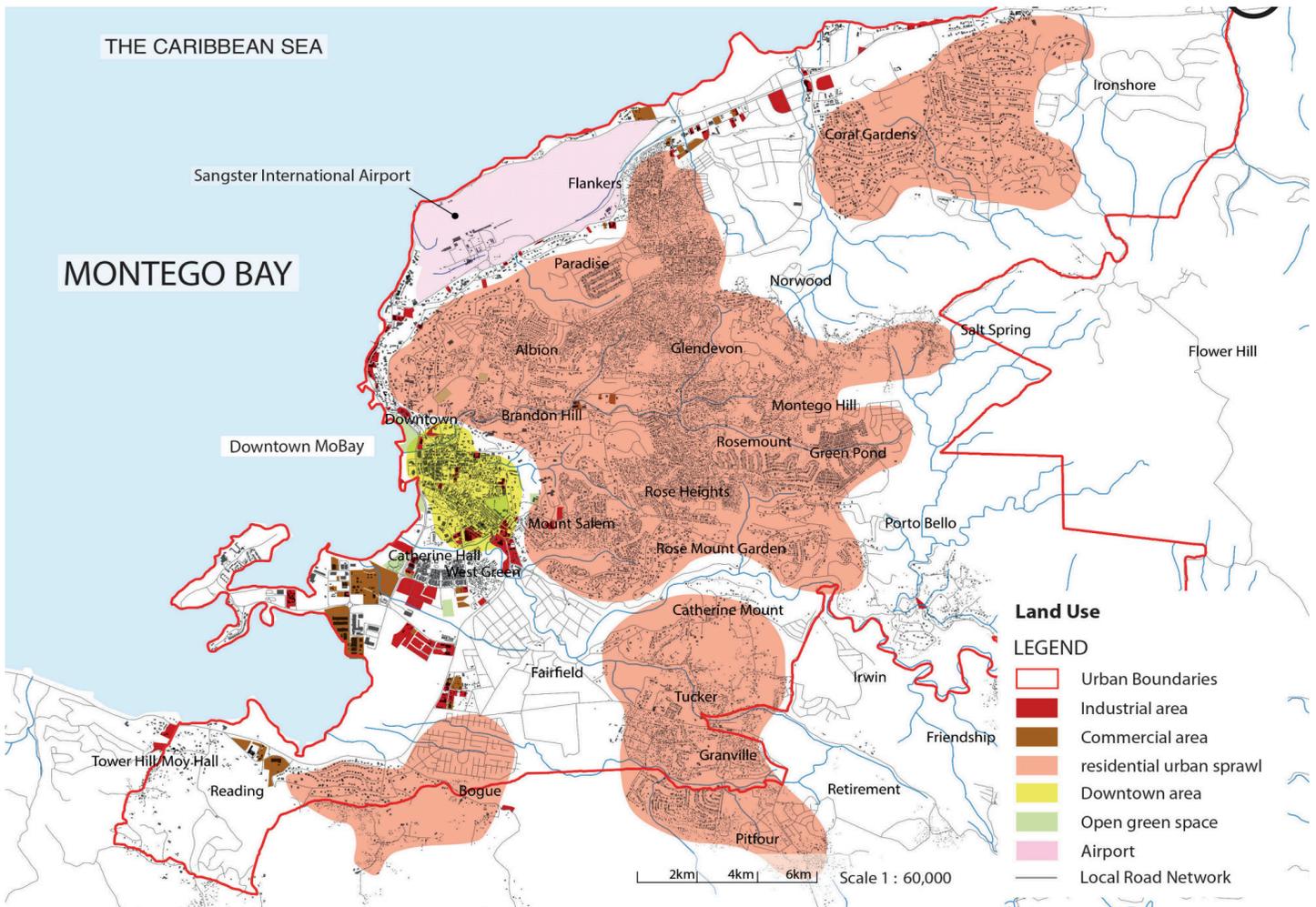


Figure 4 Urban map showing the segration of zones including tourist districts and residential districts

URBAN PLANNING ISSUES

The most pressing issue with the tourism industry in Jamaica is that it has gradually affected the urban planning of the country, in specificity, Montego Bay, which is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Jamaica. The issue in current urban layout of the city is innate to the way tourism in Jamaica has been promoted. Since, the tourism industry stemmed from utilizing the scenic coastlines of the country beginning in 1970s, clusters of hotels and resorts have been developing only along the coastlines. The concentration of the tourism area has effectively pushed out the locals towards the outskirts of the city.

Furthermore, these phenomenon has been occurring under zoning laws that have not been reviewed ever since they were first constructed in 1983 and hence resulted in a very clear segregation between the two zones in Montego Bay area. As the government's focus has been on the tourist areas, the rest of the city in terms of its infrastructure fundings have been neglected, causing the residential areas to be filled with informal settlements in which the local residents are not provided with adequate environments for standard living.

This physical separation not only hinders the locals from entering the natural scenic beaches for themselves but this line of segregation also results in lack of locals participating in the tourism industries, causing a decline in the overall income of the local residents.

RENEWAL PLANS FOR MONTEGO BAY

Recognizing the issue with the current urban masterplan and foreseeing that the negative impact will only continue to worsen, the city council of Montego Bay has proposed an urban renewal plan that incorporates urban infrastructure level construction to link the two areas and reconstructions of homes and streets currently discarded in many parts of the residential zones.

One of the major change is a new integrated waterfront park, Hip Strip. The park is designed to be equipped with beach facilities and equipments that are provided both for the tourists as well as the locals. The purpose of this infrastructure is to create a bridge between the architecture of hotels and local homes and to create an open public space in which the two groups can naturally come to interactions. Montego Bay has lacked an iconic infrastructure that could bring the diversity of groups present in the city together.

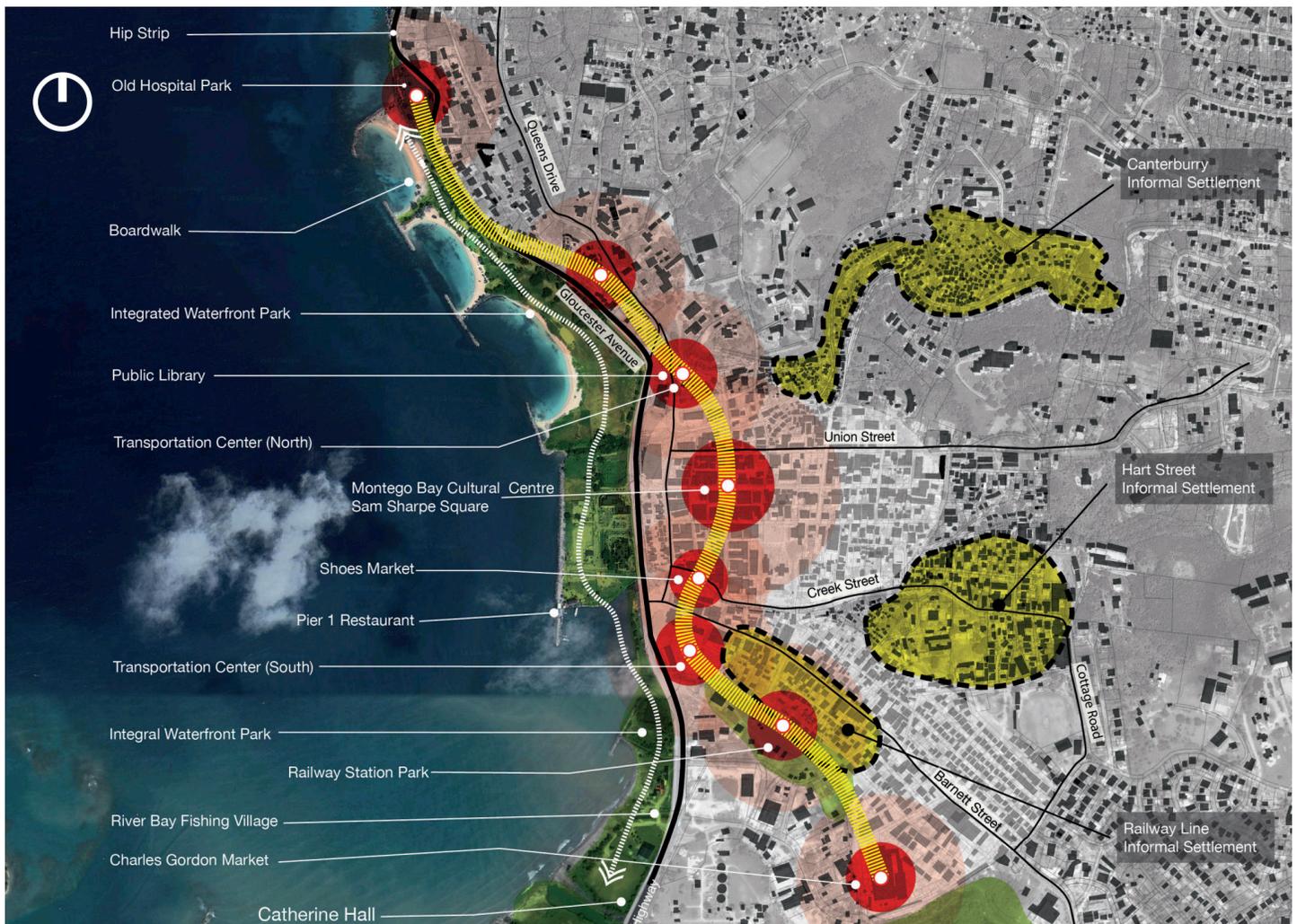


Figure 5: Urban proposal illustrating the plans for a new integrated waterfront park

The strategic boardwalk design is to induce more connections and to increase the duration of the users of the infrastructure. The main purpose of the design is to solve the issue of lack of beach that are free to access and use by the local residents as most areas of the beaches are owned by individual private hotels. The introduction of this boardwalk would also create green spaces for the residents. Furthermore, the infrastructure is planned to be constructed with multiple transports hubs adjacent to it at different points to promote easy access for the locals travelling to the place. This proposal is crucial as the segregation between the tourists and locals have left the lives of the locals at stake and the introduction of the park will effectively allow for a public space for both which in turn will push for a gradual integration between the local and tourists that will eventually benefit the tourism economy in long term.

Another part of the urban renewal plans for Montego bay is directly related to the renovation of the settlements currently present in the local districts of the city. To eliminate the growth of informal settlements and its negative impacts such as increasing crime rates, the government will push for unlimited financial capacity to make investments to benefit by reducing the property tax base through funded reconstruction of low density urban settlements.

In terms of district scale, the proposal includes a new way of organizing the city districts in a way that it is more orderly and comprehensive as a whole to generally increase safety and sanitation level for both the locals and tourists want to venture out into the local districts. These new plans for reconstructions will include an increased area dedicated solely for public spaces such as parks and streets.

Furthermore, by increasing the density of the settlements, the city will effectively get rid of spaces required for the homes of the locals and potentially create spaces that are dedicated to serve both the locals and tourists just like the waterfront park that is under development at the coast.

My Growing Home: The Extension Process



is already on its way.

Figure 6 Drawings of Incremental housing types to be constructed

As shown in Figure 6, the renovation of the informal housings will be a type of incremental housing which means that the basic structures and spaces will be first provided and as the time passes, the locals can begin to reconstruct the homes in different variations according to individual needs. This proposal was intended to provide a solution to a long term increase in the net incomes of households by providing opportunities for increases in property values in these districts.

CONCLUSION

Jamaica, as a country has a long history of colonialism and has indeed still carries the remnants of its past in terms of its economy and urban planning. The country began to thrive in its economic power through a successful tourism industry in the post colonial years and yet there are still persistent issues that are related to tourism that are hindering the next step as a country. The urban renewal plan will effectively be a cornerstone to yet another improvement as a country in the Caribbean region. The traditional way of promoting and accomodating tourism has been analyzed to be unhealthy in the long term and efforts to change that

CITATION

FIGURE 1 “TRACY K. SMITH: PHOTO OF SUGAR CANE PLANTATION WORKERS, JAMAICA, 1891.”
2014. CREATIVE TIME REPORTS. MAY 6, 2014. [HTTPS://CREATIVETIMEREPORTS.ORG/2014/05/06/TRACY-K-SMITH-PHOTO-OF-SUGAR-CANE-PLANTATION-WORKERS-JAMAICA-1891/](https://creativetimereports.org/2014/05/06/tracy-k-smith-photo-of-sugar-cane-plantation-workers-jamaica-1891/).

FIGURE 2 CARIBBEAN NEWS. 2021. THIS DAY IN HISTORY: JAMAICA’S NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AND NEW FLAG UNVEILED. [ONLINE] AVAILABLE AT: <[HTTPS://WWW.CARIBBEANNATIONALWEEKLY.COM/THIS-DAY-IN-HISTORY/DAY-HISTORY-JAMAICAS-NATIONAL-DAY-PRAYER-NEW-FLAG-UNVEILED/](https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/this-day-in-history/day-history-jamaicas-national-day-prayer-new-flag-unveiled/)> [ACCESSED 21 DECEMBER 2021].

FIGURE 3 “SANDALS® MONTEGO BAY: ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORT IN JAMAICA.” N.D. SANDALS RESORTS. ACCESSED DECEMBER 21, 2021. [HTTPS://WWW.SANDALS.COM/MONTEGO-BAY/](https://www.sandals.com/montego-bay/).

FIGURE 4 VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY: URBAN STRATEGY FOR A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN MONTEGO BAY JAMAICA FINAL REPORT

FIGURE 5 VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY: URBAN STRATEGY FOR A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN MONTEGO BAY JAMAICA FINAL REPORT

FIGURE 6 VIENNA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY: URBAN STRATEGY FOR A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN MONTEGO BAY JAMAICA FINAL REPORT