

TALIESIN WEST PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN



Prepared by

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1. PREFACE

Dear friends,

The purpose of this *Preservation Master Plan* of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West is to clearly articulate what needs to be restored and preserved, to what level and period of significance, and why. Well-considered and profoundly researched work by one of the leading preservation firms in the world, its completion represents a milestone for the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation – the first successful effort ever to answer those critical questions and to draw up a comprehensive plan to restore one of the greatest of Wright's buildings and one of the most important examples of modern architecture.

Preservation is paramount. In any preservation project, both interpretation and use of the site are important considerations. Preservation, interpretation, and use need to be thoughtfully integrated. Also needed is a clear approach to that integration – direction about which of the three has priority when there are conflicting needs. For a site as architecturally, historically, and culturally important as Taliesin West, we've been clear from the beginning that preservation is paramount; use and interpretation will follow preservation.

The Foundation will always want the public to have access to, and be inspired by, Taliesin West. Likewise, we will always want to harness the inspiration and impact of living, learning, exploring, and creating as part of a residential Taliesin Community. That said, both our public interpretation and our residential/educational offerings will evolve repeatedly in the decades to come – in order to respond to changing needs among the constituencies we exist to serve. Use, interpretation, and preservation all offer constraints. Rather than allowing the constraints of our 2015 operational activities to dictate preservation decisions, we are resolute that our use and interpretation of Taliesin West will always respect the constraints created by embracing the most thoughtful and responsible preservation possible.

Importantly, far from having a diminishing effect, deference to great preservation will make our programs and interpretation all the more meaningful. The Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Paul Goldberger wrote that "the most important thing to say about preservation, when it is really working as it should, is that it uses the past not to make us nostalgic, but to make us feel that we live in a better present, a present that has a broad reach and a great, sweeping arc, and that is not narrowly defined, but broadly defined by its connections to other eras, and its ability to embrace them in a larger, cumulative whole. Successful preservation makes time a continuum, not a series of disjointed, disconnected eras."

This *Preservation Master Plan* reflects our deep commitment to exactly that level of successful preservation.



Sean Malone
President & CEO, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Preservation Master Plan would not have been possible without the help of a number of individuals that contributed through their encouraging guidance and valuable feedback. Harboe Architects would like to thank the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation for giving us the opportunity to help them fulfill their mission and preserve Taliesin West for future generations, including first and foremost Sean Malone, President and CEO of the foundation, whose leadership and direction on this project has been immeasurable; Fred Prozzillo, Director of Preservation, whose assistance throughout the development of the master plan has been extremely valuable; as well as foundation staff members Lisa Murphy, Vice President of Finance & COO; Dottie O'Carroll, Vice President of Development & Communications; and Linda Nelson, Executive Assistant, who participated in the workshops and provided the team with assistance as we completed onsite survey work for the Preservation Master Plan.

A special thanks to the Foundation Board Preservation Committee and Taliesin West Preservation Oversight Committee members who attended the two workshops and provided valuable feedback and editing on the Preservation Master Plan. These individuals include Foundation Board Preservation Committee Chair, John Stubbs, and committee members Don Fairweather, Neil Levine, Thomas Wright, and Steve Zyalstra, as well as Taliesin West Preservation Oversight Committee members David Delong, Bill Dupont, Kathryn Smith, and Lynda Waggoner.

Harboe Architects would also like to thank everyone that provided assistance to our team as we conducted historical research. These individuals include Oskar Munoz and Margo Stipe from the Taliesin West Archives & Collections; Elizabeth Dawsari, Librarian at the William Wesley Peters Library and Taliesin Architects Archives; and Janet Parks, Curator of Drawings and Archives at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University.

Additionally, we would like to thank all of the user groups that participated in the programming interviews including members of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation administrative staff, faculty and students of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, staff members and volunteers from tours and visitor services.

And finally, the completion of the Preservation Master Plan could not have been possible without the help of a select group of the Taliesin Fellows, who lived and worked at Taliesin West under the direction of Frank Lloyd Wright and Olgivanna Lloyd Wright. Their memories and historic accounts of the buildings and life at Taliesin West were invaluable. The following Fellows were kind enough to take time to be interviewed by our team and share their vast knowledge of Taliesin West: Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Arnold Roy, Joe Fabris, Tony Puttnam, Minerva Montooth, Brandoch Peters, and Indira Berndtson. Others including John Rattenbury, Effi Casey, Frances Nemtin, David Dodge, Heloise Crista, Shawn Rorke Davis, and Thomas Olson provided helpful feedback and information to the team by attending the programming interviews and through informal conversations onsite with the master plan team.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taliesin West is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most important works. It is more than a great work of architecture; it was Wright's winter home and studio, and the place where he trained hundreds of young men and women of the Taliesin Fellowship about the principles of organic architecture and his views on how people should live together in a community. He treated the site and its buildings as a place for experimentation for his ideas and changed various aspects of the Taliesin West property almost on an annual basis. From 1938 until after Frank Lloyd Wright's death in 1959, Taliesin West continued to be a vibrant community and living architectural site. Wright's wife, Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, continued to run the Fellowship and Taliesin Associated Architects continued to create architecture based on Wright's ideas and forms. The site and building elements of Taliesin West also continued to be altered in order to adapt to the changing needs and desires of Olgivanna Lloyd Wright and the members of the Fellowship.

Taliesin Associated Architects no longer exists, but a commitment to harnessing the impact of an immersion residential/educational experience continues – currently through the remaining members of the Taliesin Fellowship and the formal Frank Lloyd School of Architecture. The ever-changing landscape of architectural education and the certainty of the eventual passing of the Legacy Fellows suggest that these institutions will likely evolve into something different in the not too distant future. However, there is a strong commitment on the part of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation that Taliesin West should continue to be a "living site." This is a fundamental aspect of what makes Taliesin West special.

The layered complexity of Taliesin West gives it a depth and richness of meaning that is only matched by Taliesin, its counterpart in Wisconsin, as a place to understand the work and life of Frank Lloyd Wright. The significance of Taliesin West has been demonstrated by its being listed as a National Historic Landmark and as one of the primary properties included in the World Heritage serial nomination, *Key Works of Modern American Architecture by Frank Lloyd Wright*, which is currently on the U.S. Tentative List for World Heritage.

This draft Preservation Master Plan for Taliesin West is the product of thousands of hours of research, on site building assessments, numerous meetings and workshops with key constituents as well as the actual writing and editing of the document. It is intended to provide the general context for understanding the complex of building and site elements that make up the historic core of Taliesin West and to serve as the overall guide for its rehabilitation, restoration and long term preservation.

It was the intent of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation that the Preservation Master Plan address the following four items.

1. Identify what needs to be preserved/restored and why.
2. Identify the level of preservation/restoration required for each of the individual components of Taliesin West and what would be acceptable alternatives.
3. Develop a magnitude of estimated costs to fully preserve/restore Taliesin West
4. Develop a prioritization of recommended future studies and restoration treatments for the individual building components at Taliesin West.

To accomplish these goals it was necessary to understand the complex of buildings that make up the 80,000 square feet of the historic core of Taliesin West. This required research into many primary and secondary source materials, historic drawings, photographs, and interviews with some of the Legacy Fellows who lived and worked at Taliesin West during Frank Lloyd Wright's lifetime. These efforts lead to the development of the section called **A Brief History of Taliesin West**. This is not intended to be an exhaustive recounting of the rich seventy-seven years of history that has created the Taliesin West of today. Such an effort would take many more months (perhaps years) of research and many more pages to tell the complete story. Rather it is intended to give the overall historic context of what is known today as Taliesin West.

The project team also spent many days onsite investigating the existing building elements, evaluating their condition and beginning to trace the numerous alterations that have occurred over nearly eight decades of change. This is reflected in the development of the **Construction Chronology** and **Condition Assessment & Evaluation of Integrity** sections of the report.

This fuller understanding of the site allowed the team to develop an overall approach of how to treat Taliesin West. This is described in a key section of the Preservation Master Plan called the **Preservation Philosophy & Approach**. It starts with the identification of all the values that are embodied in this important cultural heritage site and are the things that give Taliesin West its meaning and its significance. This in turn led to the development of an understanding of the primary period of significance of Taliesin West which was determined to be 1938-1959, the period of Frank Lloyd Wright's lifetime. This was not a simple decision and the process included an intensive two day workshop with key members of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation's Board Preservation Committee as well as the Oversight Committee, which is made up of nationally recognized experts in preservation and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. There was a very lively debate and many important issues regarding the later developments of the site were brought forward and discussed at length. In the end, it was agreed that the focus of any restoration efforts moving forward should strive to regain the values and meaning that were present at Taliesin West during Wright's lifetime while respecting subsequent significant historic and architectural features whenever possible.

Since not all the existing elements that make up Taliesin West are from the primary period of significance, the team conducted an exercise of assigning "preservation zones" to each of the major building components that make up Taliesin West. The four zones are: Zone 1 (Primary Significance) – building elements, spaces and site elements that are integral to the Frank Lloyd Wright design and development of the site; Zone 2 (Secondary Significance) - building elements, spaces and site elements not integral to the primary significance of Taliesin West but still maintain some material from the period of Frank Lloyd Wright, or building elements within the historic core significantly modified after Frank Lloyd Wright's death; Zone 3 (Tertiary Significance) - spaces and building elements outside the historic core that were largely reconstructed after Wright's death but still retain some original elements; and Zone 4 (Minor Significance) - spaces and building elements constructed after Wright's death and are in no way seen as the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Because there is still much that needs to be known to determine exactly how to achieve the goal of regaining the heritage values from the time of Frank Lloyd Wright, the proposed work for each building component can only be described in general terms. However, the **Recommend Scope of Work** section does describe the conceptual scope of work needed to return each building component back to the primary period of significance. Typically this includes an approach that preserves, restores, and rehabilitates building elements, spaces and site features which contribute to the period of significance associated with Frank Lloyd Wright (1938-59). Work will be carried out in a manner that will enhance the understanding and interpretation of the site as a seasonal winter camp but will allow make accommodation for sympathetic interventions necessary for programmatic, functional or code related needs. This is a key section of the document and contains enough information to allow the development of the Magnitude of Estimated Costs which should be seen as setting an overall goal for the entire long term project to rehabilitate, restore and preserve Taliesin West well into the future.

The enormity of that undertaking and the acknowledgement that achieving that overall goal may take some time to realize, the team has also developed a **Prioritization of Work**, so that the more pressing items can be addressed as soon as money is available to do so. It should be noted that even embarking on the projects outlined in the Prioritization of Work will require some additional research and study. The old adage, "the more you know, the more you know you need to know" is certainly true of a historic site as complex as Taliesin West. There indeed is much more that needs to be known about the overall site and the individual building components before any real building projects should begin.

To that end, it is recommended that a Cultural Landscape Report be prepared that ties the overall 620 acre site with all of its building components beyond the historic core. There should also be more in-depth study of the individual building components before any final decisions are made related to their restoration. This should include more research of the primary source materials such as correspondence, invoices, and other documents. The information gained from this effort should in turn lead to individual Historic Structure Reports for each major building component and include an overall campaign of materials analysis of the building components and a number of in situ mockups to test repair methods for key building elements such as the desert masonry and the fabric roofs systems.

Trying to describe all the building and site elements that make up Taliesin West can be confusing. It is neither a single building nor a group of buildings. Rather it is a rich complex of indoor and outdoor spaces that are created by desert masonry walls, roofs, courtyards, walkways, landscaped areas and the desert itself. They all flow together in one interconnected whole that is Taliesin West. The names used throughout the Preservation Master Plan to describe the building and site elements are typically those that are in common use today. There are also a number of other terms or word usage that may not be familiar to the reader and are fully defined in the **Glossary**.

In addition to all the information contained in this document it is vital that a thorough and clear interpretive program be developed to fully explain the history of Taliesin West. This should include an explanation of the changes over time that have occurred in the past and those that will likely occur in the future. To that end, the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation has engaged a consultant to develop an interpretation plan for the site. Those findings should be incorporated into the Preservation Master Plan so that any proposed future building projects are planned with the goals of the interpretation plan in mind.

The importance of interpretation and its impact on the future use and understanding of Taliesin West suggests the creation of a separate visitors' center. It is recommended that it be located on the Taliesin West property, but remote from the historic core so as not to negatively impact the historic building elements and landscape. This would not only allow for a more in-depth experience for visitors wanting to understand the history and meaning of Taliesin West and Frank Lloyd Wright, but will also provide an opportunity to provide visitor amenities such as a larger book and gift shop, toilet facilities, and food service. It would have the added benefit of reducing some of the burden currently imposed on the historic core.