



***Octagon House Foundation, Inc.***

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## **The Octagon House Receives Planning Grant and EPA Grant**



*Members of the Octagon House board, Foundation members, and guests listen attentively to a comprehensive master site plan presented by students in the VT CDAC.*

The Octagon House Foundation has recently been the recipient of two grants. On June 20, 2018, Elizabeth Gilboy, Nick Procter, Anastasia Tolstikhim, and Kristen Allen of the Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) presented to the Octagon House Foundation Board, members, and guests a finalized comprehensive master site plan. The CDAC is an outreach center in Virginia Tech's College of Architecture and Urban Studies. This was the culmination of an Urban and Community Forestry planning grant, valued at \$6,368.00, awarded by the Virginia Department of Forestry in cooperation with U.S. Forest Service. These funds provided for planning services through the CADAC, saving the Foundation thousands of dollars.

The presentation was complete with conceptual site maps, panoramic illustrations, and proposed redevelopment of the sight to reflect its history, significance to the community, and future usage. All of those attending were enthralled to view the results of the planning study and were not disappointed by the meticulous detailing, description, and effort by the CDAC to encompass every aspect of the restoration project while envisioning many avenues of future usage.

In preparation, the CDAC staff completed an extensive comprehensive study of the Octagon House, the surrounding community, and Smyth County. This information, combined with the Foundation's vision of the home and property's future usage, was used to develop a ten year comprehensive project design plan. This plan includes the restored 1858 home to its original condition as the centerpiece of a complex which will showcase Southwestern Virginia life both past and present. The home's formal gardens, which are currently undergoing the removal of trees in preparation for restoration and planting, will provide a venue for large outdoor gatherings such as weddings and reunions. Original species of trees, shrubbery, and flowers will be returned to the way they were during the plantation's heyday, providing for year-round usage and aesthetic beauty.

The house itself will be open for tours as construction progresses for those wanting to observe its restoration. Once completely restored, the house will be open for public tours but also be an available, but limited, venue for public or private events. Other venues on site will include a large barn-type indoor space, available for rental usage, living history demonstrations, or gatherings. A second barn-type building and restored slave cabins will house overnight accommodations with modern and luxurious amenities for guests.

The plan also includes environmentally friendly green spaces, a music amphitheatre, naturalist trails, and a connection to the Appalachian Trail. This will allow hikers an opportunity to purchase trail necessities, retrieve

*Artist's rendition of the restored Octagon House—including plants, trees, and shrubs from the house's original era—that was shown during the VT CDAC presentation.*

