



## **ARCHITECTURAL VISION STATEMENT, FREDERICK FISHER**

The Annenberg Community Beach House project was an inspiring opportunity for me on several levels. The site provides a rare combination of a dramatic natural setting, significant historic cultural and architectural assets, and a public space of regional importance. On a personal level, Santa Monica Beach has been a part of my life for 35 years and I grew up in a neighborhood with a community beach house that was designed by my father, who was an architect.

My primary images for the project were formulated in response to three compelling aspects of the Beach House site: its natural setting, its social history and the architectural remains of its heydays. The Beach House setting is a powerful combination of ocean, beach and palisades with dramatically changing weather conditions and iconic sunsets. At the Beach House William Randolph Hearst, actress Marion Davies and the architect Julia Morgan created a unique place in California history. This beach has a long and colorful history of social and recreational life. My goal was to call on all these elements to reactive the site as a community resource for posterity.

The initial framework for the project came from the Santa Monica City Council and the Annenberg Foundation:  
**Create an Exciting Public Gathering Place** that incorporates the following goals:

- Preserve and the history of the site
- Encourage a "light touch" on the site
- Create a community-oriented destination
- Provide public recreational activities
- Increase public access to the beach
- Create a range of uses
- Encourage diverse users
- Provide for year-round use
- Link to the regional open space network

The charge was to bring vision and clarity to a complex site involving three primary components: Restoration of the historic pool and deck; Rehabilitation of the landmark Guest House; and Transformation of site through new structures serving new uses.

Starting with the initial vision of Wallis Annenberg, input came from a broad range of community meetings, governing agencies and direction provided by the Santa Monica Community & Cultural Services Department as the operator, formulated the framework for the design which the project design team ultimately distilled into five fundamental objectives:

**Reference** - I imagined a "ghost" of the Marion Davies Beach House manifested by a white concrete colonnade to replicate the scale and position of the mansion. From the view deck everyone can have the memorable experience of standing on the terrace behind the columns, looking over the restored pool out to the beach, ocean and coastline. The mansion's vast footprint is painted on the surface of the parking lot. The location of the original bulkhead is memorialized as a terrazzo line across the site. The historic black and white palette of the guest house suggests the Marion Davies cinematic era.



# Annenberg Community Beach House

AT SANTA MONICA STATE BEACH



**Connection** - The 1921 mean high tide line, which has moved dramatically, becomes a Beach Walk to bring visitors onto and across the site. The Beach Walk follows this old surf line along the 750 foot breadth of the site. Visual connections were restored between the Guest House and the Pool, and beyond the site to the mountains, the pier, the bluffs and the ocean. An Ocean Walk stretches across 300 feet of beach from the old tide line to the present day tide line.

**Cohesion** - Project colors reference the Julia Morgan designed decorative tiles in the pool; a variety of garden spaces frame the rehabilitated Guest House with new landscape; a Roy McMakin sculpture installation speaks to the sentiments of history on the site; the diamond pattern of the balustrade of the Guest House veranda is reflected in the new mesh guard rails and the event room ceiling tile; and the new buildings share a material and color palette that contrasts with the historic building elements.

**Permanence** - The transitory nature of the beach is perfectly exemplified by the evolution of the site. The new and old buildings are linked together by a singular architectural element that creates a backdrop of solidity and continuity. A concrete wall stained in pale green stripes like a beach awning connects all of the buildings and buffers highway noise.

**Flexibility** - Our ultimate goal was to provide a canvas for the widest variety of activities that will naturally evolve with the community's embrace of the Annenberg Community Beach House. We imagine a broad, changing spectrum of activities from the most casual and personal moments, to group sports, poolside lounging, and formal group celebrations. Its success will reside in the new experiences and recurring rituals that people create there.

Frederick Fisher and Partners, Architects

