

Tracking the traces of the Sacred Way

The Sanctuary of Aphrodite in Aphaea Skaramangas: Design proposal to enhance the cultural and historical area

The significance of the area in ancient times, as an important stopover of the Eleusinian procession, an area to rest and accommodate wayfarers and pilgrims which depicted in the archaeological site of the Aphrodite's Sanctuary and in the well-preserved part of the ancient Sacred Way (Iera Odos) excavated from the temple towards lake Reiton, along with the uniqueness of Attica's landscape and the effort to revive it, were a source of inspiration for this research.

The main goals are:

- Integration of the large green-planted-areas of Mount Poikilo and Mount Aigaleo, as well as the settlement of Aphaea with Mount Aigaleo.
- The emergence of Aphrodite's Sanctuary through the green areas integration together with a network of open-air areas and information infrastructures.
- Connecting the area with the ancient route part of the Sacred Way (Iera Odos) from Echo Hill to Lake Reiton.
- Highlighting the two streams in the area.
- Creating infrastructure (playgrounds and sports facilities, information and accommodation infrastructures, green land leisure areas) which will attract more visitors to Aphrodite's Sanctuary and will activate the settlement.

The methodology used was primarily locating the sites of archaeological and environmental interest through research in bibliography and then identifying the problematic ones along with any dynamics that can benefit the area development. Subsequently, site surveys located the individual landmarks in the area. Finally, having in mind to develop the appropriate conditions and infrastructures that will highlight the region's history and activate the settlement of Aphaea, design redevelopment steps are being proposed.

The goal of the proposed plan is to attract the public to visit the archaeological site and to engage in recreational activities too, thus reviving the area stretching from the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and the settlement of Aphaea all the way to Echo Hill, along the path of the ancient Sacred Way.

The design proposal is based on making Iera Odos (Sacred Way) road underground in this section and the formation of a unified space above that emphasizes both cultural (Aphrodite's Sanctuary and the traces of the ancient Sacred Way towards Lake Reiton) and natural elements (streams, forest areas of Mount Aigaleo and Mount Poikilo).

Natural materials (wood, stone and dirt), colors and textures are proposed in order to be in harmony with the natural landscape and the archaeological site.

Segments of the stream will be spanned to allow for easy pedestrian and biker crossing. In addition, stops will be added along the stream to allow the visitors to take rest and enjoy the surrounding view as well.