

Laurel School Lyman Circle Campus, Seventh Grade May Unit, 2009

Bluestone Heights: place-based tool kit for reconciling city and nature

Roy Larick, PhD, Euclid Landmark Commission

On Cleveland's East Side, the Heights cities have a special foundation in nature. *Bluestone Heights*, the 2009 Laurel Seventh Grade May unit, immerses students in the natural place and its urban overlay. The goal is to find the whole in nature and its city.

Cities are places that flow fast in time. Historically, cities separate the life flows for humans and nature. Urban ecosystems are thus fragmented and 'co-evolutionary'. Is it desirable to reconcile the flows and regenerate more holistic systems? If so, we must understand co-evolution at each urbanized place.

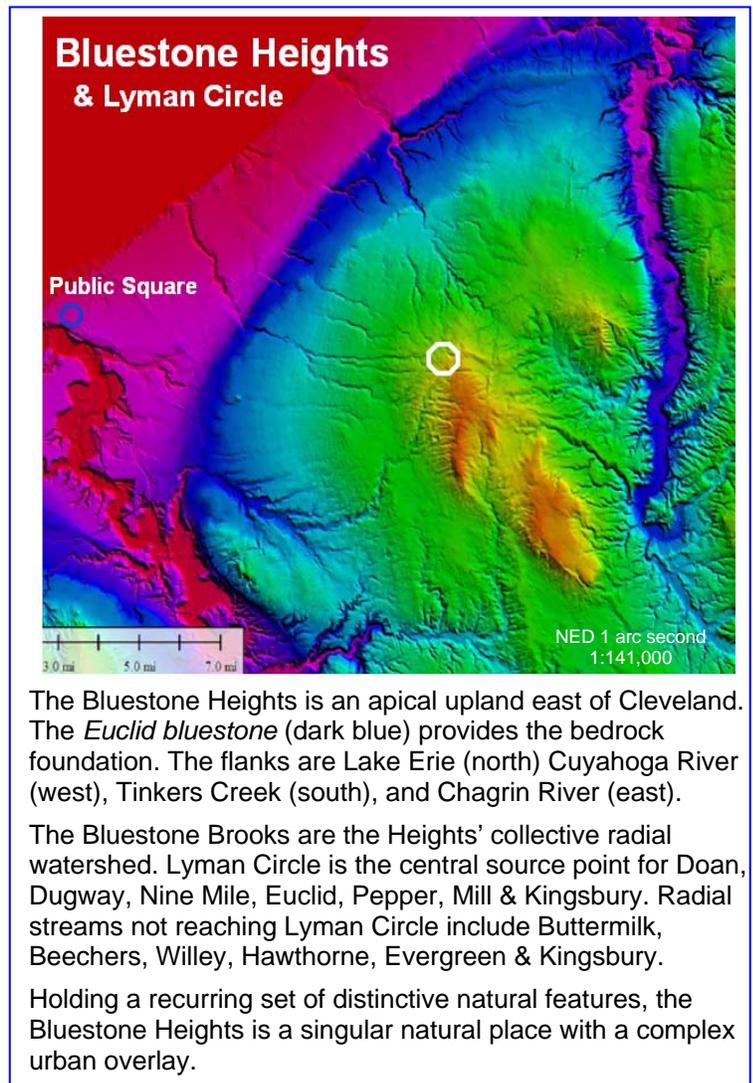
The "Bluestone Heights" is the natural place for Laurel-based city life. In a prescient stroke of early urban design, Lyman Circle lies at place center. Three questions direct study of Bluestone Heights life flows: What do we *have* at present? What do we *want* for the future? How do we *achieve* the want?

Have weaves the story of place. Nature is addressed using elemental earth and biological sciences. The human presence is then set up in prehistoric and historical stages. A Bluestone Heights co-evolution narrative is thus developed. The narrative serves to connect the student with the place, a necessary step in igniting a spirit of care for place.

Want investigates globally evolving aspirations for place and helps the Laurel student refine her own. The goal is to create strong yet flexible aspirations and a lifelong interest in place. Historical relationships between urban and natural systems are summarized. Promising current solutions are explored including local projects to integrate natural and cultural amenities.

Achieve introduces tools for reconciling city life with natural place. Archaeology, coupled with geographic information systems (GIS), is a means to identify buried or abandoned human-nature connections. Archaeology sets the stage for place-based restorative urban planning. The restorative toolkit builds on traditional conservation programs as well as on elements of Benyus' bio-mimicry, Reed's regenerative design, and Soleri's arcology.

Laurel seventh graders are on a fast path to adulthood. *Bluestone Heights* prepares them to contribute to the broader community and also to see themselves as contributors. With well-defined place aspirations, Laurel graduates may evoke care in face of development issues. With a place-based urban setting tool kit, Laurel graduates may work confidently to reconcile nature and urban life.



Bluestone Heights pairs with Laurel's Archaeology at Fairmount. Integrated topics include archaeological ethics and issues of conservation and multiple land use. Like the September unit, the May unit links natural and social sciences and emphasizes collaborative skills and multidisciplinary thinking.

Components: Two 40-minute lectures cover the historical narrative and the urban studies concepts. Two 3-hour fieldtrips take in geological, ecological and historical sites. A one-hour lab explores GIS and other terrain observation tools.