



Green Cities

Americans with green ideas
plan for better living

Lesson Two

Patterns and Plans for American Cities

Maggie Legates, Delaware Geographic Alliance, 2010

American City Planners: Early Days

Colonists who came to America in the early days were looking for opportunity and a new life. They were starting fresh.



But they brought with them some ideas about cities. Their ideas influenced the cities they planned and built.

Idea #1: A city is a fortress.

Cities should protect from enemies or bandits



Items to include:

- Walls or barriers
- Buildings crowded close together
- Irregular street patterns
- Often had a castle or fortress inside



Fortress City: People in the houses below could go into the fortress for protection.

Idea #2: A city is a marketplace

Items to include:

- Open market squares
- Shops near the street
- Sections of the city for manufacture of needed items
- Good water and road connections to other cities





Market City: Farmers and craftsmen sell their products in the open square in a European city.

**Idea #3: “City” is
the opposite of
“country.”**

Items to include:

- **Tall, narrow buildings in cities**
- **Ornate or “fancy” architecture, paving**
- **Little green space, few trees and plants**
- **Geometric street patterns not found in nature**





**Buildings fill almost all space in old European cities.
Taller buildings allow more people in a small space.
Streets are narrow and often crooked.**

Idea #4: A city is a symbol of power and wealth.

Items to include:

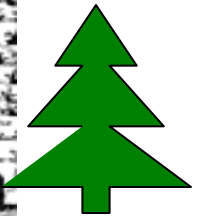
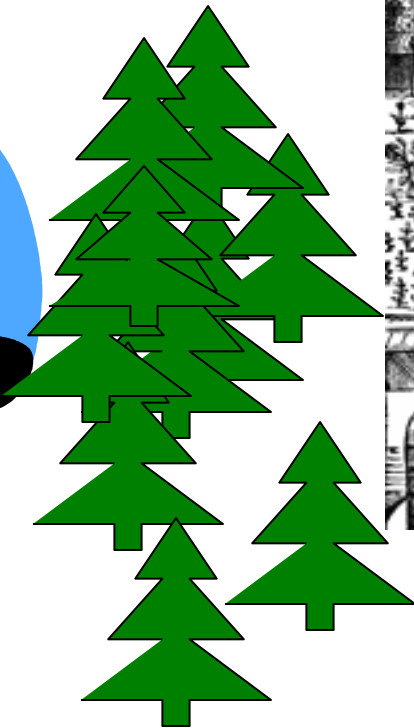
- Large, impressive public buildings and monuments
- Street plans point to symbols of power
- Open space around public buildings.





European capitals like Paris, France have monuments and showplaces. These landmarks impress visitors with the power and wealth of the country.

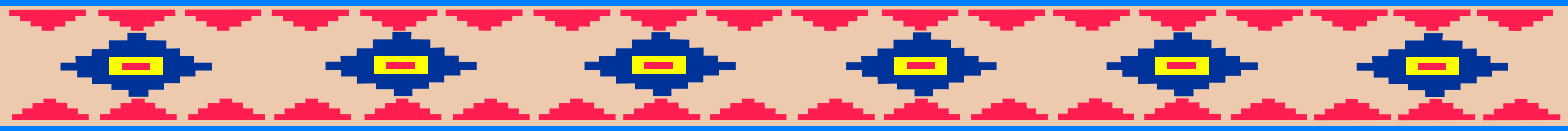
When they arrived in North America, the Europeans found some towns were already here.





Native American Settlements in North America

Native American Ideas:

- Buildings spread out over a larger area
 - Settlement a part of natural surroundings
 - More temporary, easy to change
- 

Planners of new settlements were
looking for:

- **A good SITE**

(Physical and human characteristics at a location)

and

- **A good SITUATION**

(How easy to reach needed resources or other settlements)

Early colonial sites

Physical site characteristics:

- Near the mouth of a river, with a good harbor
- Good view of water and land access
- Access to areas with raw materials for shipping home
- Access to trade with Native Americans

Human site characteristics

- Small populations, usually in hundreds of people
- More men than women, few children until later years
- Few people could read and write
- Most colonists were young
- Many indentured servants, a few slaves
- Buildings were simple, often temporary
- Small area inside, walls or fences for defense

Consider their **situation**

Remote, or far from

- **home ports**
- **other European settlements**



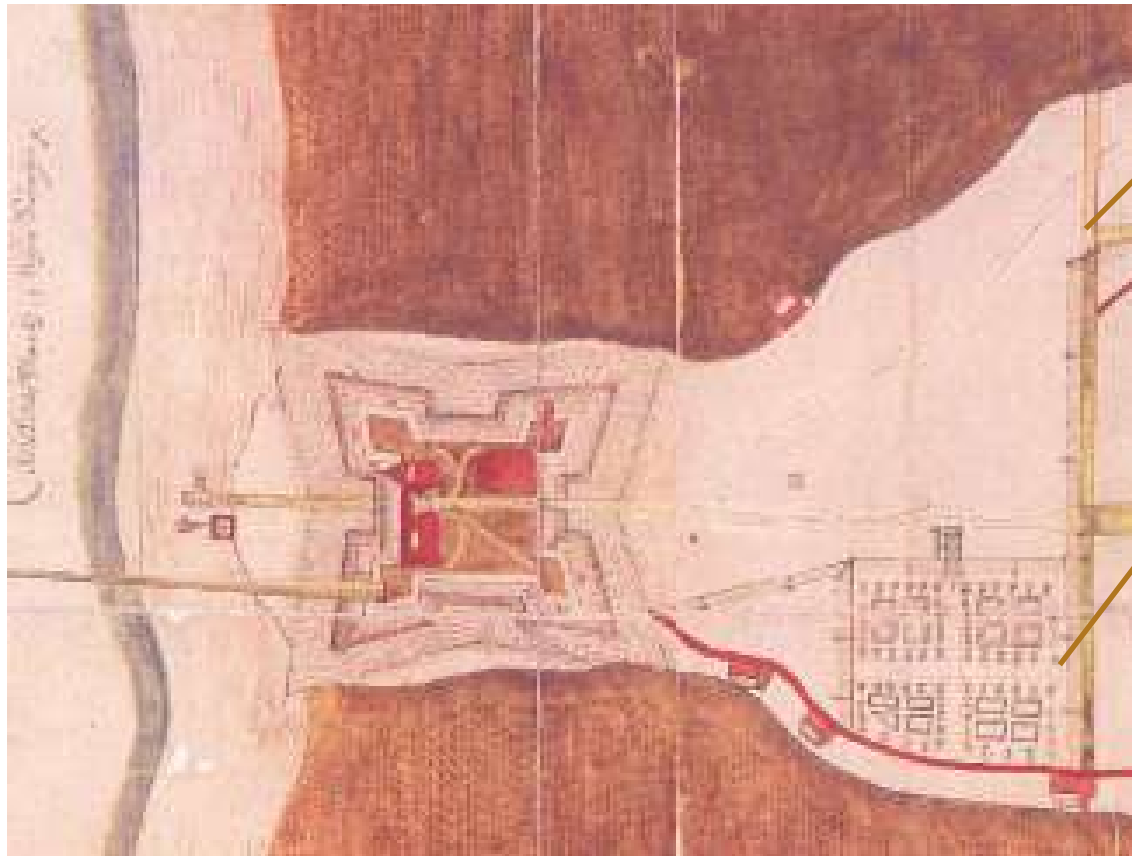
Close to

- **Native Americans (potential danger)**
- **raw materials and natural resources**
- **wild animals and other hazards**



As you look at early city plans,
consider these questions:

- Did the planners use “Old World” ideas when planning the city?
- Did this settlement have a good **site**?
- Did this settlement have a good **situation**?

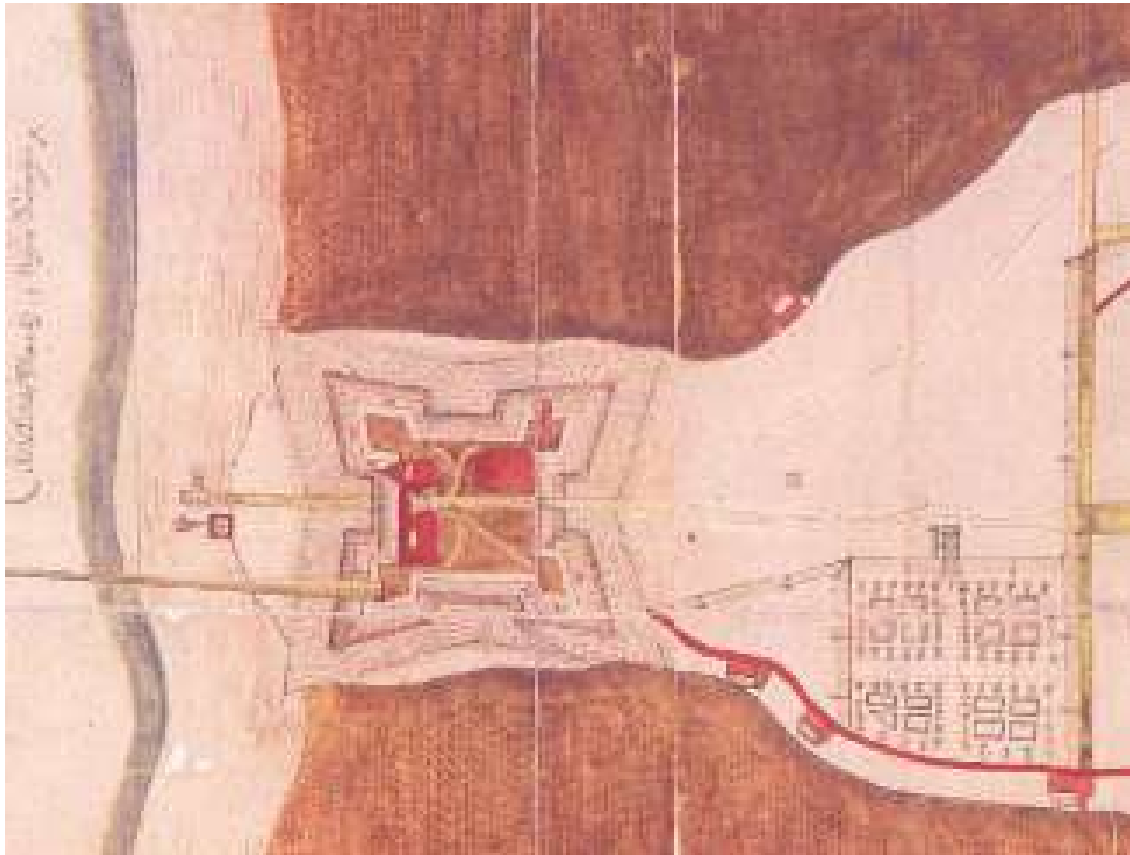


Fort Christina

Christenham

This detail of an old map shows Ft. Christina and the village of Christenham, established by Swedish colonists in 1638.

Image courtesy of Kalmar Nyckel Society

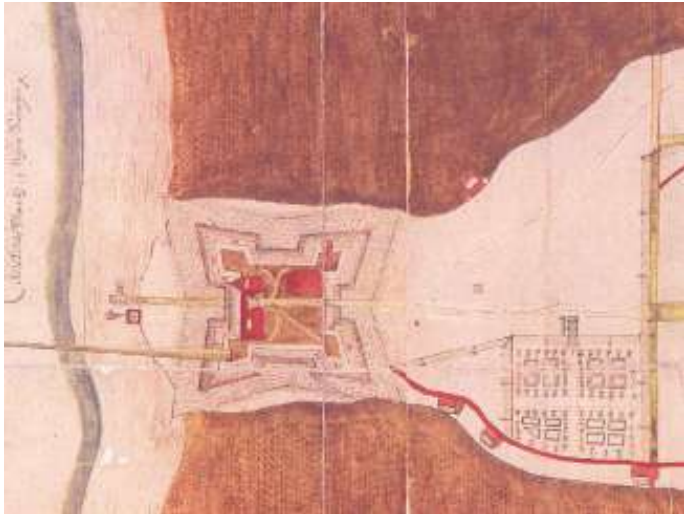


What **European ideas** did the planners include?

What are the **physical features** of this site?

What are the **human characteristics**?

What is the **situation** of this settlement?



What **European ideas** did the planners include?
(Walls and a fortress, streets in a geometric pattern)

What are the **physical features of this site**?
(Near a river, harbor for ships, rocks for landing)

What are the **human characteristics**?
(Small number of Swedish settlers, some sailors and soldiers)

What is the **situation** of this settlement?
Thousands of miles from Sweden. South of New Amsterdam and north of Virginia and Maryland colonies. Near Native American trade routes.

Not far from Jamestown was St. Mary's City, the first capital of the colony of Maryland. It was established in 1632. The main streets formed huge triangles, meeting in the town center. Brick structures marked the corners. Smaller wooden buildings filled in along the sides. The city's road plan was similar in form to designs used in 16th-century Rome, Italy.

Map and information courtesy Historic St. Mary's City, MD.

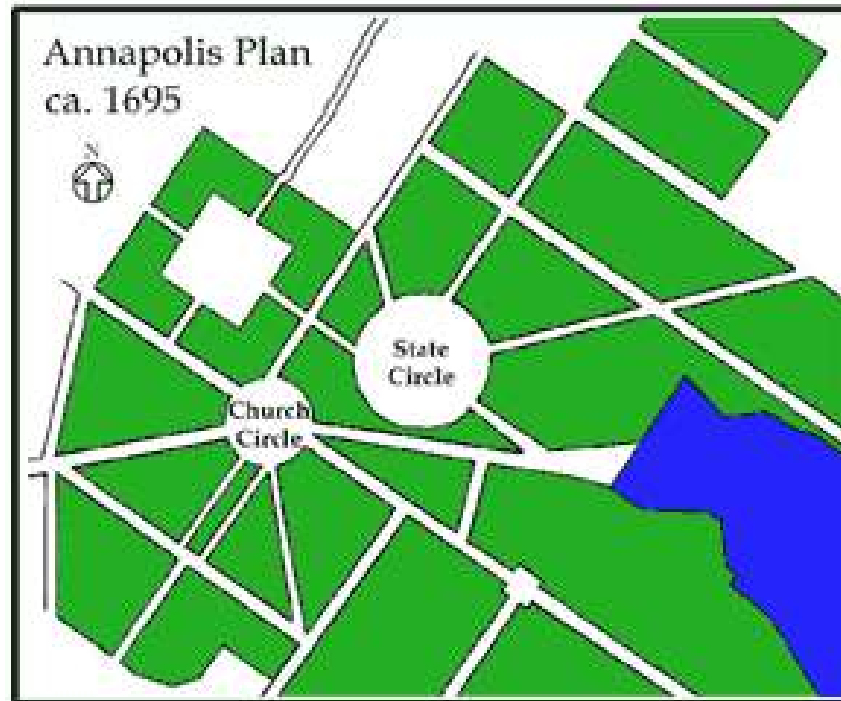


Main streets form large triangles



Roads meet at Town Center

When the capital was moved to Annapolis, MD, some of the same ideas of city planning were used in the city plan. These ideas are called “baroque.”



New Amsterdam-

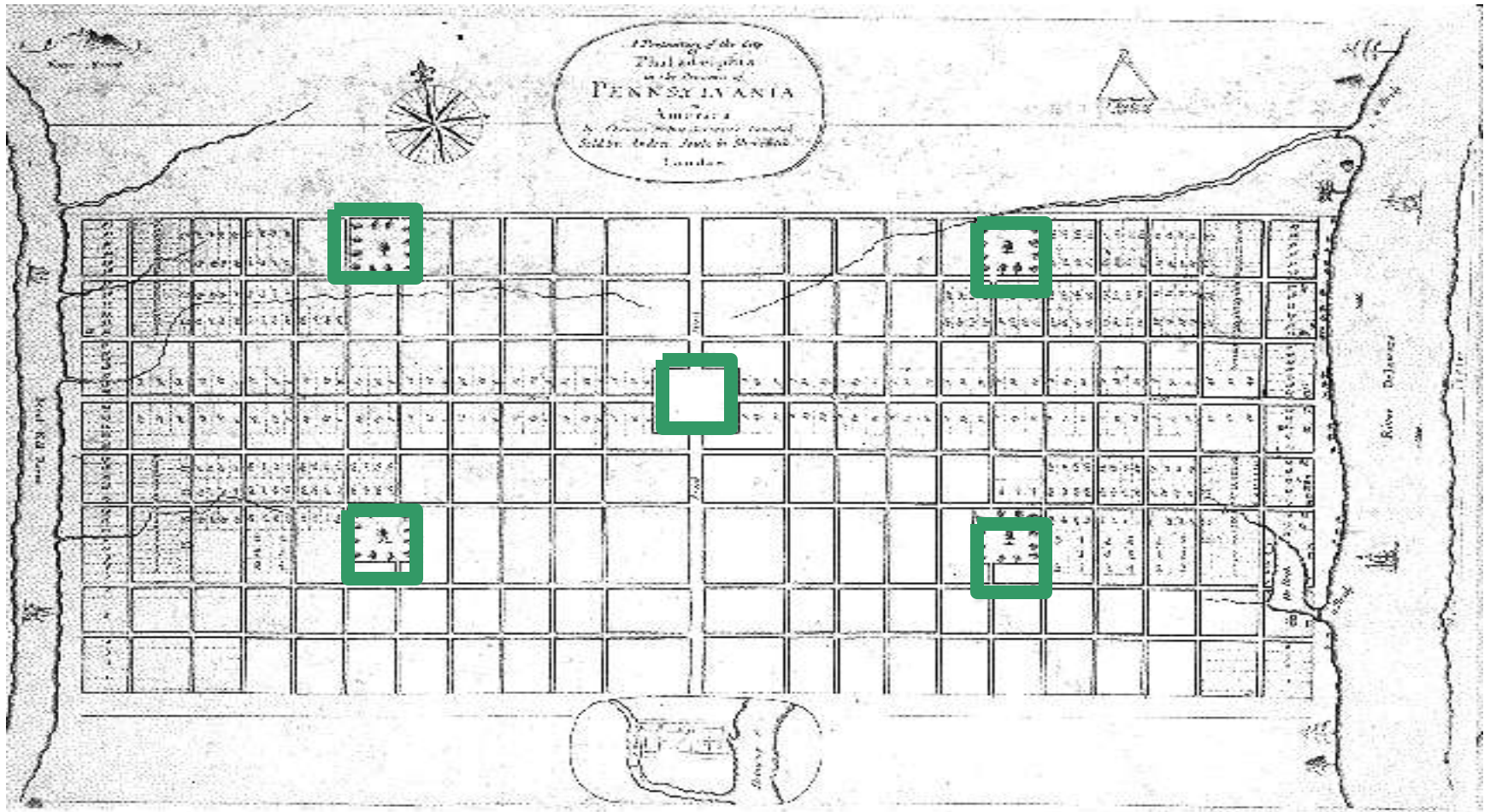
By 1660, Dutch colonists had planned New Amsterdam, the city that would become New York City.

Fort (now called the Battery)

Wall (now Wall Street)



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was designed by William Penn in 1683. Note the five market squares.



Savannah, GA in 1770

City Square



“strand” along the water’s edge

New Amsterdam

Philadelphia

Ft. Christina and
Christenham

St. Mary's City

Jamestown

Savannah, GA is
south of the area
shown



Image courtesy of Kalmar Nyckel Society

Which American city is a good example of...

- A fortress city?
- A marketplace city?
- An urban center, not like the countryside?
- A center for power and wealth?
- A city that included green or open spaces?

How do people of different cultures differ in the way they build cities?