

2. Master Planning Process

UAF Master Planning Committee Consultant Planning Team Campus and Community Involvement Issues Planning Goals Concepts and Goals

UAF MASTER PLANNING COMMITTEE

In 1998, the chancellor appointed the 15-member UAF Master Planning Committee (MPC), composed of faculty, staff, student and community representatives, to lead master planning efforts for the campus. Since January 2001, the MPC has guided development of this new master plan, working closely with the consultant planning team throughout the planning process. In addition to the committee's regularly scheduled meetings, the MPC has participated in a series of workshops with the consultant planning team—held in January, March, April, June and September 2001—to set goals for the master plan and to review and refine planning concepts.

CONSULTANT PLANNING TEAM

The consultant planning team is composed of Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT), San Francisco, campus planners, and Bezek Durst Seiser, Inc. (BDS), architects, Anchorage. WRT has a long history of campus planning throughout the country and brought a level of experience to the project that few firms can match. Richard Macias, who directed the project, has completed over 65 master plans during his long planning career. The campuses have ranged from a new university in Malaysia to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. WRT is headquartered in Philadelphia with offices in San Francisco and San Diego, Calif.; Coral Gables, Fla.; Dallas, Texas; and Lake Placid, N.Y.

Bezek Durst Seiser of Anchorage has a long association with UAF and has done projects throughout the state of Alaska. Most recently, Dan Seiser, principal, BDS, was the architect for the Duckering Building renovation project. The firm also conducted the recent facilities condition analysis and was the associated architect on the Natural Sciences Facility.

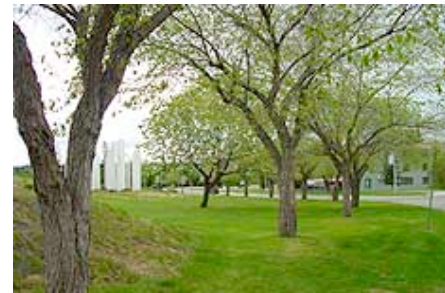
CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The planning process has reached out to all segments of the community. Several mechanisms have been in place to inform the community and to solicit input, including the university's master planning website—www.uaf.edu/mastplan—which contains detailed information on the development of the campus master plan and the ongoing activities of the Master Planning Committee.

Other efforts included:

Campus Interviews

At the start of the planning process, the consultant planning team conducted over 30 interviews with representatives of the university's colleges and schools, research institutes, administrative departments



Trees along Cooper Drive



A view of Constitution Park

and student and alumni organizations.

On- and Off-Campus Community Surveys

Two surveys posted on the Web have sought campus and community opinion on the strengths and weaknesses of the physical environment of the campus—in particular, the aspects of the campus that provide its unique "sense of place"—and asked for suggestions for improvement.

Community Photography Project: Looking Through the Lens at UAF

Sponsored by the Associated Students of UAF (ASUAF), the UAF Alumni Association and UAF University Relations, this community-wide participatory photography project brought the community (students, faculty, alumni, staff and community members) into the master planning process in an unusual and exciting way.

In April 2001, approximately 30 volunteers were given point-and-click cameras and asked to take pictures of the campus. Their charge was to photograph those areas of campus that say, "This is UAF"—a special place, building, vistas—as well as places that say, "This is not UAF,"—including parking lots, eyesores and poorly designed buildings. In addition, they were asked to include a one-line comment about each photo.

The photos, along with many of the comments, were on display from April until the end of the 2001 academic year in the Wood Center mall, with a satellite display in the West Ridge Café. Arranged into three basic categories, "Special Places," "Appearances are Everything," and "Getting Around Campus," the display provided a "photographic tour" of campus, showing "the good, the bad and the ugly." Comment boxes were available and people were encouraged to add their thoughts about campus.

UAF Alumni Association

MPC members made a presentation on the master planning concepts to the UAF Alumni Association in April 2001.

Chancellor's Summit Meetings

Updates on the plan were given at Chancellor's Summit meetings, attended by deans and directors, in May and September of 2001.

Chancellor's Cabinet

The cabinet was provided with periodic updates on the plan throughout the process. In addition, the planning team director met with the chancellor almost every time that he was on campus.

Faculty Senate

The MPC chair gave a presentation to the Faculty Senate in April 2001. Subsequent updates were provided for the Faculty Affairs Committee: one in November 2001 and a second in January 2002.

University of Alaska (UA) Review

On Nov. 1, 2001, members of the MPC met with the University of Alaska Statewide Administration staff to present the draft plan. The vice president for finance and planning and vice president for university relations provided review and comment on the plan, as well as a synopsis for the UA president. The following week, both the UA Foundation and the UA Board of Regents had an opportunity to view the master plan display boards. A short presentation was made to the regents on the plan, with final approval slated for the June 2002



The future campus



Places that say, "This is UAF."

meeting.

Meeting notes, comments and survey results are available on the web or at the UAF Facilities Services Division of Design and Construction.

ISSUES

Recurrent issues emerged from the campus interviews, surveys and student comments. Key among them were:

Campus Image

The positive image projected by the campus derives mostly from the natural rather than the built environment. The campus' ridge-top location, panoramic views, boreal forest, farmland and trails create a strong and uniquely Alaskan sense of place. The image of the built campus, on the other hand, needs improvement. The expansive parking lots, confusing circulation, dissimilar architecture and absence of landscape detract from the positive image of the campus, particularly during the long winter months. Also at issue is the generic quality of the built campus and the desire for it to "be distinctive and celebrate Alaska."¹ Student comments called for "more art in public places—more art everywhere!"²

Campus Structure and Future Growth

The campus has developed along an east-west axis, with an upper and lower campus orientation as well. A key issue is bridging the gap between the two core areas of campus—making the campus "feel smaller" while accommodating future growth.

Space

Space is at a premium in all areas, especially suitable contemporary laboratory instruction and research space. At issue, too, is the need for a process to assess and maximize appropriate space utilization in current facilities and to project future needs for specific functions. This process is critical for prioritizing the use of scarce capital resources for renovations and for new construction to meet a variety of changing space demands.

Landscape and Open Space

The expansive forest and open land that make up much of the campus property distinguish UAF from other universities and produce the "special qualities of spaciousness, light...and...tranquility"³ that are prized by the community. Within the built campus, however, landscape and planned open space are conspicuously absent, as noted in comments such as "create more green space and preserve the little that is left"⁴ and "[the] campus needs more outdoor places to gather...."⁵

Pedestrian Environment

In general, there are few spaces in the built campus that provide appropriate amenities for pedestrians. An ill-defined pathway system, steep topography, silty soils and constant competition with cars and maintenance vehicles make getting around campus on foot a challenge. As summed up by one student: "Sidewalks way too narrow for safety. Cars way too fast! Parking garage desperately needed. Keep campus safe for walkers."⁶

Parking

The tendency over time to place parking as close to buildings as



Alaska's unique sense of place



Expansive parking lots detract from the campus image



Students want "more art everywhere"



"Create more green space..."

possible has resulted in surface lots consuming much of the interior of the campus. Even with a surfeit of spaces, however, there still is a perceived need. As one person expressed it, "There is no shortage of parking spaces, just prime parking spaces."⁷ The gold decal system, which allows individuals to reserve spaces, creates animosity among the "have-nots" and only adds to the frustration of finding a parking space.

Poor pedestrian connections and limited shuttle service add to the problem as expressed in the following comment: "Either fix the parking situation or improve the walking trails/routes so it is easier to get from building to building and especially from Lower Campus to Upper Campus."⁸

Circulation

The perimeter loop road is incomplete and the campus roadway system is generally confusing. Since pedestrians and vehicles share many of the same routes, narrow or non-existent sidewalks along roadways and poorly defined street crossings create continual conflicts.

Wayfinding

The lack of consistent, well-designed signage and confusing circulation make the campus a "hard place [for the community and visitors] to find your way around."⁹ Exterior building signs vary, although some improvement has occurred on Lower Campus with the addition of the bronze building designations to most facilities. West Ridge has significant inconsistencies from building to building. In addition, there are no standards for interior signage. Most buildings lack interior directional as well as informational signage. Again, what signage does exist lacks cohesion and good design.

Use of the Total Campus Land

The built campus occupies most of the developable land, approximately one-tenth of UAF's total 2,250 acres. The remaining land is used for outdoor research, teaching and recreation and is considered an invaluable resource essential to the mission and identity of the university. Planning, therefore, needs to address the total campus property.

Relationship to the Community

UAF provides intellectual, cultural and recreational opportunities for the community. In addition, it is a major employer with over 3,500 employees. Although many community members come to campus regularly, others do not take advantage of its resources because of the perceived lack of parking and difficult wayfinding.

PLANNING GOALS

To guide development of the master plan, the MPC established the following planning objectives at a workshop held on March 8, 2001. These objectives, which address the preceding issues, guided the evolution of the master plan goals.

Planning Process

- Maintain an open planning process in order to gain the support of the campus community for the plan.
- Address the full breadth of the UAF campus, including both the developed core and the surrounding research and recreational lands.
- Provide a planning model for remote sites and community



...and outdoor places to gather"



Hillside stairs



Reindeer at the Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station



Smith Lake

campuses.

- Build flexibility into the master plan.
- Coordinate with other plans in progress

Image

- Use the master plan to inspire a vision for the campus.
- Make the campus' appearance reflect a sense of pride in the university.
- Create a sense of place.
- Create a pedestrian-friendly campus

Campus Structure/Future Growth

- Create a coordinated plan that ties together the many good elements of the campus.
- Establish a physical environment that supports the educational goals of all students, from undergraduate through graduate education and beyond.
- Identify logical sites for future development.
- Define the limits of development for the campus.
- Congregate space and create identifiable places for each department.



The annual Equinox Marathon, held on campus

Parking and Circulation

- Create a coordinated plan for parking that promotes efficiency and clarity.
- Provide maximum ten-minute headways for the shuttle system to make it an efficient and desirable transportation option.
- Develop a coherent vehicular and pedestrian circulation system that emphasizes pedestrian movement on campus and ties the entire campus together.
- Link campus walks with the trails.

Landscape and Open Space

- Integrate features of the surrounding boreal forest throughout the campus.
- Identify and protect the important outdoor spaces on campus.
- Identify and plan for additional recreation areas.

Relationship with the Community

- Make the campus more accessible to the Fairbanks community.

Process for Campus Change/Design Guidelines

- Establish a clear process for initiating campus change, applicable to all projects regardless of their scale or funding source.
- Develop comprehensive architectural and site design guidelines to guide all future campus development.
- Establish criteria for a wayfinding plan.

Implementation

- Establish a realistic phasing and implementation sequence for campus projects over a five-to-10 year period.

CONCEPT AND GOALS

Based on the planning objectives, three master plan concepts were developed and presented at a workshop held with the Master Planning Committee on April 19, 2001. A fourth concept emerged from this session and was further refined and submitted to the MPC and posted



Double row of birch trees in Constitution Park

on the Web in July 2001. During the period of review between July and September, the MPC identified five goals that serve as the foundation of the master plan:

- I. Create an efficient and attractive campus environment conducive to learning**
- II. Improve community access to the UAF campus**
- III. Make vehicle circulation and parking simple and direct**
- IV. Promote safe and efficient travel throughout campus for pedestrians and non-motorized uses**
- V. Highlight natural assets of campus and the unique northern environment**

Working with the consultant planning team, the committee articulated a set of actions designed to best achieve these goals. The actions were further defined through a series of implementations, as detailed in [Section 9](#) of this plan.

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- 1 Campus interviews
 - 2 Student photo project
 - 3 On-campus surveys
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Student photo project
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 Campus interviews
 - 8 Student Photo Project
 - 9 Campus interviews

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