

7. Planning Opportunities

CAMPUS CAPACITY

Campus growth projections are used to assess the impact on the campus of using land at the current rate and to determine a theoretical “capacity” for the built campus. As illustrated in the accompanying chart, the acres of land used by buildings (minus housing), housing and associated land, and parking for an FTE enrollment of 3,061 are projected linearly as enrollment increases up to 6,000 FTE. Assuming that the amount of unbuildable land—i.e., steep slopes, forest, plazas and recreation areas—and land occupied by roadways stays constant while parking and building coverage increase at the current rate, all available land, including potential open space, would be consumed by the time FTE enrollment reaches 6,000.

The purpose of this capacity study is not to predict growth but to illustrate that the university has choices in how it continues to use land. For example, increasing the percentage of students and faculty living on campus requires using a denser housing type than single-family houses if open space is to be preserved. But the greatest opportunity for maintaining a balance of open space within the built campus comes in the way parking is handled in the future. Maintaining the current parking ratio and using surface lots exclusively will continue to consume sizable amounts of land. On the other hand, lowering the parking ratio and/or adding structured parking offers the university the option to provide adequate parking while preserving the distinctive open character of the campus. In short, land uses are interrelated and it is only by planning for them together that sound judgments can be made about the future of the campus.

CAMPUS CAPACITY

		Enrollment Growth by Full-Time Equivalent Students		
Category	Status Fall 2000	4,000 FTE	5,000 FTE	6,000 FTE
1 Main Campus Enrollment - Headcount (HC)	4,938.00	6,451.61	8,064.52	9,677.42
2 Main Campus Enrollment - Full Time Equiv. (FTE)	3,061.56	4,000.00	5,000.00	6,000.00
3 FTE as % of Headcount	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62
4 Gross Square Feet of Buildings (GSF)	2,583,921.00	3,375,953.44	4,219,941.79	5,063,930.15
5 GSF/FTE	843.99	843.99	843.99	843.99
6 Parking Spaces (Total)	4,051.00	5,280.00	6,600.00	7,920.00
7 Parking Ratio (spaces per FTE)	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32
8 Acres of Developed Campus	229.00	229.00	229.00	229.00
9 Acres of Building Coverage	20.00	26.13	32.66	39.20
10 Housing Acres	31.00	40.51	50.64	60.77
11 Acres of Parking	27.00	35.20	44.00	52.80
12 Acres of Roadways	22.00	22.00	22.00	22.00
13 Acres of Unbuildable Land	55.00	55.00	55.00	55.00
14 Acres of Remaining Land	74.00	50.16	24.70	-0.76

University of Alaska Fairbanks

CAMPUS STRUCTURE

The physical distance between the two ends of campus poses both opportunities and challenges. The 20-minute walk between Lower Campus and West Ridge—more time than the 15 minutes allowed between classes—can only be bridged by an efficient shuttle bus system. However, the walk along Yukon Drive also provides an opportunity for pedestrian travel and extraordinary views. At all times of year, even in the middle of winter, people can be seen walking along Yukon Drive. The best opportunity to foster exchange between Lower Campus and West Ridge is to create an efficient transportation system that includes the completion of Tanana Loop, expanded shuttle bus service and a more pedestrian-friendly corridor along the length of Yukon Drive.

CAMPUS IMAGE AND IDENTITY

The identity of the campus is closely tied to the natural landscape. Consistently, members of the campus community have identified the proximity of nature as one of UAF's chief draws and what distinguishes it from other university and college campuses. However, the reality is that while much of the campus and neighboring land contains pristine and unspoiled forest, within the built campus, little effort has been made to preserve or restore the landscape. Instead, parking lots and roadways, unrelieved by any planting, dominate. The Alumni Drive entrance is a prime example. A mass planting of spruce and birch here to screen the physical plant would radically change the campus image at the entrance.

The built campus of UAF covers an estimated 229 acres and is a combination of both open land, structures and mixtures of boreal forest. These 229 acres are nestled within a larger area, approximately 2,600 acres, of relatively undeveloped land with extensive forest cover. The combination of these two components of the campus has been an important attraction for students, staff and the public. Landscaping with greater use of flowers, trees and shrubs should be emphasized to further diversify the image of the built campus, which contains extensive parking lots and roadways. Planting groups of trees can be used to help screen views of campus structures such as the Physical Plant along the Alumni Drive entrance. Landscaping with flowers and trees can substantially change and enhance gathering areas such as the Fountain of Flags area.



Distant view from campus



West Ridge



Grove of trees along Cooper Drive

VIEWS

The spectacular views that the ridge-top location affords are one of the great assets of the campus. The view south from Yukon Drive is unparalleled anywhere else on campus. Efforts should be made to protect this view well into the future.

FUTURE BUILDING SITES

There are potential sites on both Lower Campus and West Ridge that would promote compact, efficient development of the campus and preserve substantial areas of open space. Many sites have good solar orientation, excellent views and/or capacity for parking below. Some sites are currently being underutilized as surface parking lots and should be considered for future development (see Future Campus map in Section 8).

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Currently, there are very few places on campus that are pedestrian friendly. People on foot often find themselves precariously close to traffic, many times without a walkway. The completion of the north central segment of Tanana Loop offers the opportunity to reduce vehicle traffic in the interior of the campus, particularly along Yukon Drive. Opportunities exist elsewhere on campus to improve pedestrian safety by separating parking and/or traffic, such as at the Fountain of Flags or in the long, rectangular space at the center of West Ridge plaza area.

LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

Planning for the landscaping of the built campus should utilize stands or groups of trees planted to provide specific functions for color, shape and wildlife habitat. Clusters of trees planted as a component of the overall landscaping can be used to substantially add to the character and dominance of trees on campus. Spring green-up, summer flowers, fall leaf colors and winter berries and colorful bark are all contributions that trees can make to the campus. They should be a major component of the landscape plan in conjunction with the

contributions of shrubs and flowers. The beauty of the surrounding boreal forest enhances the overall campus landscape.

Hand-in-hand with reforesting the campus is the need to protect existing open spaces. The land between the museum and the Natural Sciences Facility, the former College Observatory site, is an area that brings the forest directly into the built campus and helps to enclose Yukon Drive and give it scale.

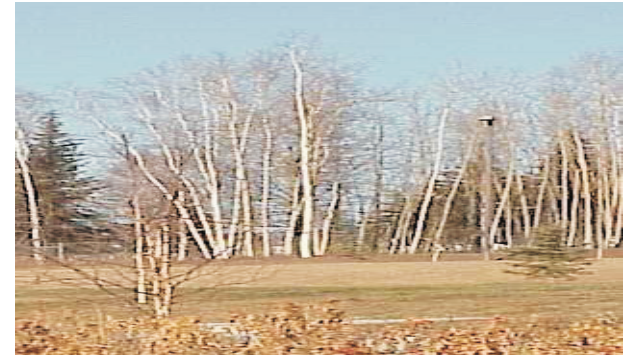
PARKING AND CIRCULATION

Given the large number of parking spaces currently on campus, there are opportunities to remove some lots for other uses without greatly affecting the overall availability of parking. Particularly on Lower Campus, there are opportunities to use existing small, inefficient lots as building sites for new facilities with parking below. Parking structures would help immeasurably to consolidate parking in a more orderly and efficient system and free valuable land in the core areas for building sites and open space. Perimeter lots linked to the interior of campus by direct walkways and efficient shuttles offer another opportunity for removing parking from the interior of campus. In addition, minimizing on-street parking in the non-residential areas helps move traffic more efficiently and reduces overall maintenance costs.

Completion of the Tanana Loop will simplify circulation and reduce traffic from the center of campus. With the construction of Thompson Drive and closure of Fairbanks Street as a vehicular route, there is an opportunity to improve the intersection of Alumni Drive, Tanana Loop and South Chandalar.

HOUSING

The aging single-family housing on Copper Lane, North Chandalar and Chatanika and the Chancellor's house provide the opportunity for redevelopment with higher density, up-to-date housing types that would make more efficient use of the land and respond to student and faculty needs. There is also an opportunity to explore potential partnerships with private developers or other entities to finance new housing as an alternative to sole reliance on state funding.



Open space between the museum and NSF



Parking west of Lola Tilly Commons



Cutler Apartment Complex



Recreation field

RECREATION FIELDS AND ATHLETICS

Due to the topography and remaining vegetation, few large flat areas exist in close proximity to student concentrations. Rather than assume that these areas, such as the one near the Student Recreation Center along Tanana Loop, present opportunities for parking, they should be considered for recreation areas. Recreation areas should also be programmed into the development of residential areas, including playgrounds for children near faculty housing.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Improving access and wayfinding is one key to dispelling the perception that the campus is remote and inaccessible and to making the resources of the campus more available to the community. Having an understanding of how to move through the campus and knowing that one will be accommodated are essential if visitors are to feel comfortable on campus and want to return.

In addition, UAF needs to become more actively engaged with the community in promoting public/private partnerships, both on and off campus. Working with local businesses to provide services to university students, faculty and staff near the campus edges should be explored, such as along the south side of Geist Road and the east side of University Avenue. Opportunities for private entrepreneurs to partner with UAF on campus should be explored when there is a clear tie to the academic mission. For example, although the present food service contract at UAF is exclusive, many campuses around the country have successfully adopted the food court model, bringing recognized food purveyors into campus buildings to provide services. The research and development park concept is one that may well have merit and provide additional ties with the community. However, the campus plan indicates that such a park would be located on campus lands outside of the Tanana Loop perimeter. The university needs to also be mindful of planning issues that affect both the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the university.