

## ***UAF's South Campus Area***

To: Chancellor Joan K. Wadlow

From: John D. Craven, Chair  
UAF Master Planning Committee

Date: January 18, 1999

Subject: 1. Recommendations Related to UAF's South Campus Area  
2. Ancillary Questions that arose during consideration of the recommendations

The issue that sparked the MPC's interest was a simple question: "What can be done to improve the appearance of the south side of the UAF Power and the University Park building"? The MPC's interest expanded from there to include other issues in what has become known to the MPC as the South Campus; an area bounded by University Avenue to the east, Geist Road to the south, Fairbanks Street to the west and the Alaska Railroad to the north. The occupants of that area are West Valley High School, Hutchison Career Center, and the University Park building. Some of this land is leased to another user, but it is all UAF land.

The original question was motivated by the consequences of recent construction work at West Valley High School that has eliminated, to its north, a fairly dense stand of willow, aspen, and spruce. These trees acted as a visual screen between the South Campus and UAF's Power Plant and Physical Plant, and with their removal the rather unattractive south sides of these UAF facilities are fully visible to more than just passengers on the Alaska Railroad. It has a significant visual impact when viewed from the South Campus and from parts of Geist Road and Fairbanks Street.

Similarly, an expanded view of the west side of the University Park building was created when a new access road to West Valley was constructed. Everyone arriving at or leaving West Valley via University Avenue now passes by the University Park building, for which no significant visual improvements have been made since UAF acquired ownership.

A subcommittee of the MPC (Gary Copus, Deb Wells, and Mike Supkis) was appointed to assess the situation and make recommendations to the MPC. To supplement the ground views of the area and to get a better sense of the area involved, two members of the subcommittee took an aerial tour of the location: Gary Copus piloted his plane and Deb Wells took photos using a digital camera. The results of this survey are available for viewing. From ground and air views, the subcommittee made the following initial observations:

1. There is virtually no buffer between West Valley High School and the University. What trees still remain are few and far between.
2. The view from the south side of the University is virtually unobstructed to the Power Plant. Although an important structure in terms of function, it is singularly unattractive, nonetheless. This does not present a positive picture of UAF.
3. The west side of the University Park building is clearly visible to all vehicles exiting West Valley. As it currently appears, there is virtually nothing that links the University Park building to UAF, visually speaking.

Based on this subcommittee's presentation and the discussions that followed over several meetings, the MPC makes the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation**

To enhance the view of UAF from the South Campus area and from the Alaska Railroad, the present visual impact of the Power Plant and Physical Plant must be modified. Specifically, it is recommended that Facilities Services be directed to prepare landscaping and paint-color designs to enhance the view of UAF from the south,

and, after full consideration, the designs should be executed. Examples to be considered should included the following:

- The entire complex be painted in muted colors that will that will not draw attention to the buildings. Visual attention should be directed towards the campus buildings farther up the hill. Exterior color selection for the new construction now underway south of the Power Plant must be included in this plan. This recommendation further supports efforts to enhance the new College Road entrance.
- The large tank at the Power Plant presents an opportunity to display UAF's Nanook symbol to announce UAF to train passengers and from the South Campus. As it is now, a tourist passing by on the train doesn't necessarily know with whom the buildings are associated, or if they do the general state of the area doesn't present UAF at its best. Other signage may provide the information so that the tank's presence can be further muted.
- The services of a landscape architect should be obtained to determine the best solution for a combination of fast- and slow-growing trees to further reduce the visual impact of the area.

[MPC recommendation "South view 1/18/99/1"]

### **Recommendation**

To establish more clearly UAF's presence in the South Campus area and to enhance the University Park building, it is recommended that the University Park building be painted in the paint color scheme used at the Eielson Building and Signers' Hall. This further establishes the color scheme established for the main campus. Appropriate signage needs to be installed to clearly identify it as a UAF building. The old exterior skin of the Butrovich Building in storage here should be removed from the grounds as soon as legal hurdles are overcome. Overall consideration of the view from University Avenue must be given attention. [MPC recommendation "South view 1/18/99/2"]

The MPC's discussions of these issues over the past several months have raised three important points for we would benefit from your guidance.

First, **the committee would like to know the obligations of leaseholders for UAF lands they currently occupy.** In the case at hand, what are the School District's obligations to restore forested areas removed as part of the construction and/or to maintain and/or enhance UAF's appearance? Was any consideration given to any of this as part of the construction program, or is a leaseholder without obligation to maintain and/or enhance where possible UAF's presence? Furthermore, is a leaseholder of UAF lands required to present plans to UAF's MPC in advance of construction, first as a courtesy and second as any condition associated with land use? It certainly can be said that the School District's activities have significantly impacted UAF's appearance and its land, impacts that would not be allowed within the main campus lands without serious on-campus discussions.

Second, **the committee would like to know UAF's responsibility as a leaseholder** when making use of another's land for our purposes. What are our responsibilities towards that land and building we own or lease and what is the responsibility of UAF, academic departments and/or the administration, with regard to how we present ourselves visually (e.g., signage, waste materials, etc.)? What are our obligations at the end of lease? This issue was raised early in the fall semester because of UAF's impending capital expansion at the Toolik Field Station in the Brooks Range (a \$5M project managed by IAB).

Third, **the committee would like to know how you view the University's Advisory Landscaping Committee's relationship with the MPC.** Is it an independent body that makes recommendations to you and does it, like the Trails Committee, have any obligation to the MPC? We have made numerous recommendations in the last days with regard to the College Road and Loftus Road entrances to UAF, and in each case we have raised the issue of landscaping. There is the large-scale landscaping associated with the major construction programs and the smaller-scale efforts under the care of the advisory landscaping committee. They certainly can make contributions to the large-scale effort through their advice, and we would welcome their contributions.