

Expansion of the UA Museum

To: Chancellor Marshall Lind

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

Date: September 15, 1999

Subject: MPC Recommendation Related to Expansion of the UA Museum

The principal museum architect designer and her design team have met with the Master Planning Committee (MPC) on three occasions to discuss issues relevant to the MPC's obligation to the chancellor and the existing 1991 Campus Master Plan. The evolving design was presented in increasing detail at each meeting and at the last meeting of August 26 the design was said to be at the 99% schematic level. The consensus opinion is that the addition's exterior design is exciting and can set the stage for future architectural designs on the campus and in interior Alaska. There are no objections to the site plan for the museum addition itself. Specific observations and recommendations of the MPC are provided herein.

Recommendations

1. Central to the Master Plan is the principle of a pedestrian campus. Moving the tourist bus unloading and loading zone from Sheenjek to Yukon Drive is in conflict with this tenant of the plan for it increases campus pedestrian interactions with bus and tourist traffic along a well-used pedestrian route where local pedestrian traffic is expected to increase in the future. Furthermore, it seems inappropriate that a view of such a signature building should be intentionally blocked for periods of time by buses in the act of unloading, waiting, and loading. In this regard, it seems wishful thinking that buses would unload in the front, park in the rear, and then return to the front for loading. Present Facilities Services plans call for sidewalks on the south side of Yukon Drive so longer-term parking or other interference with the south side of Yukon Drive will not be an option.

The pedestrian-walkway-vehicular-drive combination from Yukon Drive to the front entrance is confusing and probably unworkable. Close access to the front entrance may be an ADA requirement and the Fairbanks community has identified direct access as an issue. However, it seems inevitable that the present design will also become the direct access route for anyone so inclined, independent of the designer's original intention. At its simplest the design provides a shortcut to parking at the rear.

It is recommended that the traffic flow around the museum be reconsidered and then reviewed by the MPC. All vehicular traffic should be directed to the north parking areas off Sheenjek as part of a consolidated design that accommodates all users, minimizes interactions with pedestrian traffic, and optimizes visibility of the signature building from the front areas.

2. The abstract geometrical shapes and color of the museum exterior raise the issue of conformity with the aesthetics guidelines of the Master Plan. There is no standard exterior design for buildings at UAF. In fact, diversity is practiced on a giant scale so it is hard to oppose yet a new form of architectural diversity. However, several things can be done to soothe the significant differences with the surroundings.

- Compatibility with the more rectangular geometric forms of most buildings in the neighborhood may require the careful attention of a professional landscape architect and the services of individuals familiar with indigenous plants, trees, and shrubs. It is recommended that a

comprehensive landscape design plan for the museum and the surrounding areas be a part of the overall museum project. Funds should be designated for this purpose.

- Color selection for the museum addition must take into account the existing buildings and their colors in order to avoid visual conflicts; there must be compatibility with the existing campus color standards.

3. The stark metal exterior of the design accents one Alaskan industry, the mining of mineral ores. The use of indigenous materials should be used where appropriate throughout the interior and exterior of the building.

4. The designers must fully resolve all issues of snow and ice movement from the roof areas and the possible negative effects of impacts with persons, plantings, and fixed structures near the building.

5. Increased vehicular traffic in the museum area will increase pressure on UAF to (1) fully define how a completed North Tanana Drive should look and (2) define a timetable for its completion. The chancellor should instruct UAF Facilities Services to work with the MPC to find a long-term solution. Museum traffic must always be diverted away from the lower-campus area.