

Arctic-Antarctic 2001 Project

To: Chancellor Marshall Lind

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

Date: February 17, 2000

Subject: Arctic-Antarctic 2001 Project

On February 3, 2000 the Master Planning Committee received a formal introduction to the Arctic-Antarctic 2001 Project by UAF Vice Chancellor Williams, including a written general description of the project and technical information on the proposed structure. Because so much about this project is in the form of unknowns, it simply isn't reasonable for the MPC to formulate recommendations. In place, we provide an initial collective opinion based on what is known.

We understand that Facilities Services and the Fire Marshal are reviewing the very limited technical specifications and supporting data that have been provided to date. Overall, it appears that there is inadequate information with which to determine the feasibility and advisability of siting the structure at UAF. This includes issue of mechanical design, utilities (water, sewer, electricity, steam, etc.), and Alaskan and other code compliance issues (e.g., seismic, ADA, fire, etc.). For the purpose of the MPC discussion, it is simply assumed that none of these issues preclude UAF acceptance and use of the structure. It is further assumed that fiscal issues are being tracked by the administration.

Of greatest importance to the MPC is the question of UAF use. Based on the MPC recommendations for the Brooks Building and your acceptance of those recommendations in your letter of February 2, 2000, it is of utmost importance that a committee is established immediately to develop a short list of potential long-term users. The use must be consistent with the UAF Mission Statement and Goals 2000. We have no preconceived notions concerning the buildings use for academic programs or other relevant UAF functions. In an environment of thoughtful planning, it is simply too early to make that determination.

Determination of building location is dependent on too many unknown parameters, not the least of which is the question of connection to existing utilities. If it is to be used for research only and/or for graduate science-related education, then a West Ridge location is consistent with long-term planning. If it is for undergraduate education only, then it makes no sense to locate it farther west on the West Ridge than the museum complex, as it extends the transit time for students between classes, and is inconsistent with long-term planning. Given the limited size of the building, it does not seem compatible with an even greater mix of student and research functions; e.g., undergraduate, graduate, and research.

The MPC does not support siting the building to the south of the SRC, on either side of Tanana Drive. Other recommendations are being considered that relate to the Beluga Pad area. The long-term plan for peripheral parking outside the campus loop road would be seriously impacted if this building were placed to the south of the SRC and Tanana Drive, an area soon to be affected by construction of the new campus entrance at Loftus Road. This entrance raises an interesting question. Could the building be incorporated as part of the new entrance well south of Tanana Drive? We have talked about an Information Center and the Harper Building is nearby. Are they in need of more space? The intent here is only to stimulate thought with regard to an area not generally considered part of the campus; because of the new entrance, this area will soon be viewed in a different light.

The shape of the building has raised questions of compatibility with existing buildings and the design for the museum addition. We do not support a close visual connection between this building and the signature building design for the museum, so we specifically exclude from consideration the space directly north of Yukon Drive and between the Museum and the Natural Science Facility. This is not the sole reason, however. In the absence of architectural design input, we see no reason to exclude the building from the campus based only on its shape. For example, the UAF building could incorporate exterior surrounding designs at and around the base that unify the curvilinear surfaces with other such surfaces on the West Ridge: Butrovich and its surrounding walls, IARC, and the museum after completion of the addition. Why does it have to look like a spaceship on spindly legs as opposed to a curvilinear structure incorporated into a more massive base? This is the province of an architect, not the MPC, and the administration, for additional money would be needed.

Parking and campus vehicular and pedestrian circulation are issues central to the MPC's charge. The new building must be sited in a manner that does no harm to long-term plans, however poorly presented in the existing '91 Master Plan and as being shaped by the MPC in its approach to an update of that plan. Clearly, parking for one 18-hour concert is secondary to the overall circulation plan for what would follow.