

University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus Master Plan

Regent Neighborhood Association Meeting Meeting Notes – January 31, 2005; 7:00 to 9:00 PM McClain Athletic Center

Presenting: Gary Brown, Alan Fish, Gwen Drury (Facilities Planning & Management)
Attending: approx. 40 residents & interested parties from the Regent Neighborhood Association

Agenda: This meeting presented draft concepts of the overall campus master plan to residents of the Regent Neighborhood Association for their initial review and input. Below are comments and questions recorded at that meeting. Items shown below in *italics* are comments by FP&M staff for clarification.

1. The Park Street & Observatory Drive intersection was pointed out as a problem during the last master plan process. Nothing was changed about it since then. The gentleman commenting was on the Bike/Ped committee at the time, and they couldn't get accident statistics. He poses this as an example of a micro or operational situation that he would like to see improved in the context of an overall master plan.

This particular intersection has indeed been a problem and it's true that it has not changed since the 1996 Master Plan. However, this intersection will be addressed as part of the Wisconsin Union master plan which is currently underway. The answer to this problem is likely to be bigger than simply changing the intersection.

2. Consider non-traditional modes of transportation.

In all of our transportation planning efforts we look for options to traditional modes of transit. The university prides itself in being a leader in Transportation Demand Management initiatives and offering options to all campus users.

3. How are we considering discouraging people from choosing to drive alone to campus to work?

The university is looking at a variety of methods from encouraging bus transit use with free bus passes, to initiating innovative funding programs to encourage faculty and staff choose to live closer to campus so they can walk, bike or bus to campus rather than drive.

4. The V.A. hospital looks to be the same vintage as some of the other more difficult buildings on our campus. How will they be changing or upgrading their facilities?

UW staff have begun meeting with the VA Hospital administration to engage them in a joint planning effort for their property.

5. A comment was made in support of the idea of a new pedestrian overpass over Campus Drive, closer to the western part of campus.

This master plan includes a pedestrian & bike overpass, which would link the Old University Avenue corridor to the CALS area of campus.

6. Flex parking is one of the most effective things the UW has done.

We have received many compliments about the benefits of the Flex parking program. The UW is a national leader in Transportation Demand Management strategies, and we plan to do more.

7. It seems that many homes abutting the campus are now multi-family rental properties (even if owners say a member of the family lives there.)

The University is exploring partnership opportunities with the City and the State to create an Employer-assisted Home Ownership Incentive Program that can help our employees to purchase homes within walking distance of

work. Such a program could result in less need for on-campus parking, better air quality from less vehicular commuting, improved neighborhood aesthetics from truly owner-occupied homes, a more mixed demographic that can patronize a wider variety of businesses, and other benefits.

8. Someone commented that Van Vleck is a building that actually works, unlike the Humanities or Van Hise Hall.

We have gotten feedback from the Math Department, which now occupies Van Vleck, that they are happy with the building itself. The area at the base or plaza level of the building is the main concern for the master plan, since it is perceived as unattractive and non-functional.

9. Concern about setbacks was raised and whether there might be a canyon effect on University Avenue if the buildings all become too tall in this area.

There will be a stated “build to” line in this “Design Neighborhood,” so the first floor footprints will be close to the sidewalks, increasing their accessibility and sense of welcome. We will also have some areas where the building set back away from the street to provide small gathering areas. The massing of the buildings will also probably include “stepped back” floors, to avoid creating sheer, vertical planes right at the sidewalk level. Additionally, we intend to change the streetscape through extensive use of street trees. These will alter any “canyon” feel for pedestrians, providing shade and making walking more pleasant in all seasons.

10. Keep disabled parking spots dispersed within the campus. Accessible parking is needed across campus.

While we will be consolidating lots of inefficient surface parking into structured ramp parking, we intend to leave some surface spaces dispersed around campus for disabled parking.

11. Thank you for the evening and weekend parking in Lot 20 by McCardle Labs. It works well for those who need to be on campus late into the evening.

We anticipate keeping the same sort of parking policies in place – most lots are free after 4:30 pm.)

12. Try to keep vehicular traffic growth off of Highland, Farley and Franklin Streets. It is too disruptive to the neighborhood.

We are doing a variety of things to promote alternative modes of commuting to the west campus, as there will be moderate growth in this area in the future. We are creating a bike path that will run along the railroad corridor, from east to west. This path will intersect with the area where a new transit stop will be built, if the county implements their commuter rail concept. People could take the train in, then bike to their west campus destination. We are also considering more bike-commuting centers, which could include covered bike parking with lockers and shower facilities. The commuter buses could have a stop at the bike center, as would the campus bus. Another transit initiative that could impact the west campus could be the Mayor’s proposed trolley system, as he has indicated interest in connecting the route to the UW Hospital. We are investigating more Park & Ride options for commuters from the western suburbs, regardless of which end of campus is their destination. We are also working on improving transportation within the campus. Our hope is that an improved intra-campus transit system will also help commuters feel more at ease about leaving their cars at home.

13. The master plan process is an opportunity for the University to build a more unified-looking design aesthetic for the campus and the way it blends into the neighborhoods.

We entirely agree with this observation. For the first time in the campus’ history, we are establishing Design Guidelines and a Design Review Board to help keep individual projects on track. We plan to implement varying “neighborhoods” of design on the campus, to help create a more unified look, but also a specific sense of place within the campus, depending on where one is. We are sensitive to the fact that the campus has grown to the point at which we no longer have a “back yard” available to us within the campus boundary. What we have thought of as our “back yard” is also a neighbor’s “front yard,” so we plan to create much more aesthetically sensitive interfaces. We plan to create new areas for our support services, but we plan to build them in such a way that their aesthetic will not communicate that these are “back yard” functions.

14. Trees. Replace what gets cut down.

We will be doing far more than just replacing what gets cut down. Our plan for Open Space includes extensive installation of street trees, for the way that they change the use of the area. Street trees provide shade for pedestrians and cyclists – two modes of transport that we are working to encourage – and they have a calming effect on vehicular traffic. People tend to drive more slowly in tree-lined areas. All of the campus' utilities are buried underground, and we are working to ensure that the utility corridors will be sited to best accommodate tree roots, with special attention to creating pockets where trees with the potential to become very large can really establish themselves.

15. Scooters/Mopeds. Need to address parking issues.

Few other campuses in the Big Ten have seen such a growth in scooter use. We suspect that scooters have become so popular on our campus because we have a large, long and rather linear campus. The bus currently takes quite a long time to traverse this entire stretch. We are working to establish a rapid bus route that could get someone from Memorial Union to the Hospital in 10 minutes. Additional bus service, like the current 81 and 82 routes, that create a connection between campus and areas with dense concentrations of students, could run during daytime hours, potentially reducing the current appeal of scooters as well. We are currently working on establishing specific parking areas for scooters, so that they don't end up parked randomly all over campus. We don't plan to ban scooters, but we also don't want to encourage them. The campus is working so hard to reduce vehicular emission;, it doesn't make sense to encourage the use of more 2-stage engines, such as those used by scooters.

16. Sometimes planners should move building sites to accommodate trees.

Gary Brown explained how they actually have been doing this on several of the more recent major projects on campus. For example, a large swamp white oak and a large elm tree are being saved at Microbial Sciences and a large number of oaks were saved near the new Crew House.

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