

T e c h n i c a l M e m o r a n d u m

Date October 2008

Project Tennessee State University Campus Master Plan

Subject 2. Goal Formation  
2.2 Goals and Issues for Future Academic Programs

From BKV Group, Inc

To Tennessee State University

A series of interviews were conducted by the BKV Master Planning Team, including the faculty, staff, students, administrators and community members of TSU, to gather fundamental information for the master planning process. Interviews were held with the Deans of each College, Directors for Athletics and the Library, Chief Information Officer, Vice Presidents and the President beginning in the summer of 2007 and occurring on a bi-monthly basis throughout the year and into 2008. Formal presentations were made to review the information and master planning concepts which resulted. We presented the master planning concepts to the same groups who contributed to the programming and focus group activities completed earlier in the process. Modifications to the original master planning concepts were made in response to the input gained from discussing possible scenarios with campus groups and to gather any additional concerns from the planning participants.

**1. CAMPUS CHARACTER AND SPACIAL ORGANIZATION**

There was a general consensus that the TSU main campus has developed a traditional collegiate image that successfully presents TSU to the community in and around Davidson County. The Avon Williams campus presents a more “corporate” identity and is contained within a single massive building that has none of the open spaces and environmental conditions typical of a college campus. The TSU main campus was established around a clearly defined campus quadrangle. This planning model should be continued and strengthened as much as is possible with the placement of future buildings and the development of open spaces. The Avon Williams campus was designed to be highly “urban”, efficient and of service to the predominantly “non-traditional” students which make up the student population.

**2. INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS**

**General Feedback (TSU Main campus)**

The following feedback is a summary of the interviews and focus groups which the planning team facilitated throughout the planning cycle. These formal requests are not organized in order of priority they are:

- A need for a distinctive “front door” to the TSU main campus. Currently, the John Merritt Boulevard/28<sup>th</sup> Avenue North intersection serves most arrivals but

does not present a appositive image. Other arrival points are at Albion and 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Walter Davis Boulevard and 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and at the intersection of Schroeder Lane and Ed Temple Boulevard.

- Provision of student spaces to interact, study and relax indoors and outdoors. Maintain the commitment to HBCU mission and vision as an access institution; one which is “genetic” in nature; one generation following another
- Create a campus aesthetic that includes seasonal plantings and artwork in the public realm
- Embody some of the energy of the “Music City” culture
- Develop a “green” campus vision and strategic plan to provide students, faculty, staff and visitors a means of practicing sustainable energy saving protocols including developing a curriculum around these principles
- Re-introduce football to the campus such that a greater campus community experience can benefit students, faculty, staff and visitors
- Improve the transition between the 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Ed Temple Boulevard and the commercial area east of these major vehicular arteries and the TSU main campus
- Maintain the same character of buildings and improve the density of the campus. Vertical growth should be kept at a 4 story maximum height
- Utilize multi-level parking facilities to preserve the open spaces on campus while also increasing the quantity of spaces
- Need for special student life, recreation and sports facilities at the campus core that can accommodate diverse student activities during and after class hours

#### **General Feedback (Avon Williams campus)**

- Improve the community spaces in the Avon Williams campus to be less “corporate”
- Find ways to merge the two cultures of the main campus and Avon Williams
- Evaluate redundant facilities which include the libraries, cafeteria, Security, book store and admission/finance offices

#### **Alumni Feedback**

- Locate a space where dinners can be served to 600-100 people
- Provide additional parking spaces near alumni offices and event centers
- Provide showcases for alumni recognition
- Identify a means by which famous alumni and their achievements can be celebrated
- Improve the Town/Gown relationship in physical ways by making the campus and its perimeter more pleasant
- Determine ways that the surrounding neighborhood can be improved
- Create a facility that can benefit from on campus sports (principally football) making it a place for pre-game gatherings and programs

#### **Marketing Group Feedback**

- Focus on identifying an appropriate “brand” for TSU and use that brand at both campus locations
- Increase outreach efforts that raise interest in TSU regarding its research capacity, HBCU status, increases educational standards for applicants and develops partnerships with business organizations

- Amplify the notion that TSU nurtures students who need it while also projecting an image that the educational outcomes are excellent
- Communicate that TSU is no longer the “institution of last resort”, it can become the “institution of first choice”
- Improve customer service on campus
- Improve the global recognition of TSU for research
- Bring football back to campus
- Increase summer programs for grade school and high school students
- Identify and communicate the achievements of current faculty and staff, updating the accomplishments of former students (astronaut, planetary research, Oprah)
- Increase non-state supported financing
- Create a Welcome Center

#### **Business and Finance Feedback**

- Assuming a future enrollment of 12,000 it is going to be very difficult to financially support the growth in graduate students
- Current quality does not support increased number of out-of-state students paying full tuition
- Fully implement a “one stop” center for student transactions
- Increase private giving well beyond the current \$1.8 Million
- Analyze impact of the Governor’s concept of completing the first two years of college at a community college then transferring to a upper division campus

#### **Student Feedback**

- Most students came to TSU because of family or belief that it was the only place to go
- Identified with the HBCU mission and TSU was closest to home
- Attended TSU summer programs or took a tour of campus while in high school
- Wanted/needed the campus “family” nurturing
- First year housing is generally in poor condition; many would not return to campus housing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> year
- The legacy of football on campus was a childhood experience that needs to be re-created
- Customer service on campus is poor
- “don’t walk on the grass” indicates a non-student friendly environment
- There is no place to go to collect, Floyd Payne does not have substantial student-only program spaces
- There is no 24/7 eating spot where students can collect
- Student fees are going up dramatically and for what?
- Present the master plan when finished to the entire student body
- Improve the surrounding Jefferson Street corridor, make more safe and pleasant
- Engagement in student life activities breeds success on campus
- The “talented 10 Percent” are engaged and highly successful
- Fix the small stuff first, it will make a big impression on campus
- Need more recreational facilities on campus
- Need more parking on campus

#### **General Feedback**

- Campus needs more office space for faculty and administration
- There are not enough technologically advanced library and computer labs, which currently are crowded and serve as alternative space for students
- Campus needs a definitive entry for the library, which is non-descriptive at present
- Students desire expanded options for residence halls and/or apartments
- Generally buildings are in good condition
- Lack of classrooms labs and office space affects the quality of the faculty at TSU and cause a large turnover of professors at the university
- Science lab/research space shortage

### **3. SPACE REQUESTS AND PROPOSALS**

The following information is a compilation of present and future space needs as determined by the faculty and staff based on the interviews.

#### **General**

- Better administrative facilities and technology-ready classrooms and labs
- Additional areas for student/ faculty activities and interaction indoors and out
- Land acquisition options for future facility expansion to meet academic, parking and sports needs
- Need for better facilities for recruiting purposes
- Expanded food service areas for high use times as well as expanded hours
- Suite-style housing
- Need for a day care facility or Child Development Center near campus
- Need for smart classrooms, technology-ready and computer lab space

### **4. COLLEGE AND CAMPUS NEEDS**

The Provost and Department Chairs from each College and Vice President from each administrative unit was interviewed by the consultant team to gather pertinent information about each discipline's space needs as well as to collect any overall concerns about TSU's future direction.

### **5. RECURRENT THEMES**

The critical recurrent theme at TSU is that there is not enough space. There are not enough classrooms and teaching laboratories, research space, academic and administrative offices, the library is cramped, and student center space is insufficient. Athletics needs better facilities for campus teams and recruitment purposes. The campus is deficient in recreation facilities for the entire student body.

For specific detail regarding space issues Section 4.1.4, Space Needs Findings by College/Unit, documents specific space needs from the on-campus work sessions.

### **5. PRELIMINARY COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL RECONNAISSANCE**

## **General**

Tennessee State University is located just northwest of Nashville, TN at I-40 and 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue North inside the fast growing Davidson County. The campus is bounded by a decaying commercial district to the east of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and stable residential communities to the west and south. The original campus was designed and constructed nearly 100 years overlooking the Cumberland River valley. Virtually none of the original buildings have survived although Goodwill Manor is a reconstruction of an original building.

## **Buildings**

TSU has 65 buildings on the main campus and one major complex at the Avon Williams campus. A general building walk-through survey shows the structures to be in generally good condition, yet most buildings constructed before the mid-1990's have outgrown their original intended use and are outdated in terms of today's technology-oriented educational environment. Once inside these and older buildings, it is evident that departments have reorganized spaces to serve their needs. Due to a lack of space, building storage areas have been currently converted into office spaces. Although this system may have worked temporarily to ease space constraints on campus, it has exponentially affected future space utilization concerns. It appears that now all departments are suffering from a lack of fully adequate educational facilities.

## **Grounds**

TSU's charm stems from the green, open space character of the campus. The university's open spaces are landscaped and well groomed. Although there are green areas for outdoor recreation, they are not well protected from the sun making them uncomfortable to use during the late spring, summer and early fall. Team recreation sites: the baseball, softball, and soccer fields and one intramural field are scattered around campus. The campus would benefit from additional "break out zones," campus quadrangle-type spaces, and a walking trail for student recreation and exercise.

A clear signage, orientation and wayfinding system needs to be implemented on campus. Other than campus entry signs, TSU's past directional signs are modest and difficult to follow. Signage, lighting, paving, planting and environmental graphics on a college campus should be coordinated and used to liven the urban context and commemorate special areas of the campus.

## **Servicing**

The campus allows access of large delivery trucks. However, only the bookstore and cafeteria require regular 18-wheel delivery trucks in the campus core. TSU is in need of a service corridor that can handle the delivery of goods without hampering the pedestrian circulation and visual harmony of the campus. Alternately, TSU should explore the use of central warehousing to reduce the occurrence of 18-wheel truck deliveries.

## **Infrastructure**

TSU's infrastructure system is adequate for existing conditions and is in good shape. The University has chilled and hot water loops on campus and the Power Plant building is generally well located thereby reducing the noise generated by the equipment.

### **Parking**

TSU has parking areas located in and around the campus perimeter, with the greatest concentration to the north, the second greatest concentration to the east of campus and the third concentration on the south edge. This pattern of perimeter parking supports pedestrian circulation to major classrooms. The primary visitor parking lot and information center remains in the heart of campus adjacent to the Student Center near the Library. In addition, there are many smaller surface lots which serve housing and educational purposes. Some of these lots are good candidates for future building sites. The campus goal is to continue the pattern of infilling current lots to maintain and strengthen the adjacency of academic programs and promote a pedestrian campus core. TSU currently has an excess of parking spaces which provides some flexibility in phasing this approach to campus development. Classes at TSU run in cycles: the morning peak, the afternoon peak, and the night peak. This creates parking space needs that fluctuate throughout the day. The campus will need to gain additional parking spaces before the construction of the future campus facilities begins and existing parking spaces are lost.

An increase in full-time students and a reduction in current parking numbers could become a severe problem for non-traditional students. This is a major concern because the university will not have available overflow parking to cover unexpected shortages in parking due to overlapping large scheduled events on campus. The university will need to consider the design and construction of additional parking decks to meet future parking demand. This approach would support both campus needs and community event needs such as baseball games and possible visual and performing arts events. Also, if the campus decides to expand on-campus housing, there will be a greater demand for parking than exists today, and those parking numbers must be accounted for in the construction of any additional housing areas.

### **Pedestrian Circulation**

The built environment at TSU is within a comfortable one-quarter mile or ten-minute walk each way. The pedestrian circulation on campus is acceptable. TSU is typically filled with students and faculty walking to and from class, or congregating in the open areas available to chat and relax between class periods. Circulation is clearly defined, in a continuous network of public areas. The Campus Mall offers the best-landscaped open space on campus