

Date October 2008

Project Tennessee State University Campus Master Plan

Subject 3. Existing Campus Conditions
3.1 Campus Grounds
3.1.4 Open Space and Pedestrian Circulation

From BKV Group, Inc

To Tennessee State University

The objective of this work element is for the planning team to gain an understanding of the character and pattern of the open space and pedestrian circulation system.

1. OPEN SPACE CHARACTER

The TSU campus has a variety of open spaces containing a mixture of both formal and informal green areas. The Jeffersonian ‘Rectangle’, at the center of campus, is the most formal open space on campus.

Unfortunately, due to the extreme change in topography from one end of the campus to the other it is difficult to view the entire rectangle. The Walter Davis and Harold M. Love Sr. buildings further block this rectangular form. Thus, the ‘Rectangle’ is broken up into three distinct landscape quadrangles. The middle quadrangle contains the Laura M. Averitte Amphitheater and is axially centered along as the campus’ front entry staircase at the Floyd/Payne Campus Center. This open space is intended to be the most formal center of campus with larger ceremonies and presentations occurring within the amphitheater.

The two other prominent landscape quadrangles, ‘North’ and ‘South’, contain more passive plaza and gazebo spaces. Regrettably, the ‘South’ quadrangle needs repairing with the existing brick walls & exposed aggregate concrete rapidly deteriorating. Although, the ‘North’ quadrangle is in better physical shape, the landscape and walkway design should be re-evaluated and updated to encourage more student activity.

A geometric pattern of brick and concrete perimeter sidewalks further define and accentuate the ‘Rectangle’. Additional sidewalk connections crisscross each quadrangle providing access from one side of the Rectangle to the other. Equally spaced mature overstory trees help reinforce the perimeter of the rectangular design layout. The landscape character of the remainder of the main campus is fairly informal and undefined. Sidewalks connections among the campus buildings randomly bisect open lawn and trees.

The open space character along the north side of campus is mostly exposed recreational fields and supportive parking lots. Aside from the large mass of existing trees surrounding the outdoor track, the majority of the north campus is open rolling lawn with only a few

scattered trees. This lack of cover is an issue during the often hot Tennessee weather when shade is necessary to maintain comfort while engaging in outdoor social, recreational or academic activities. The most prominent symbol of this area is the 'TSU Olympian' sculpture highlighting the numerous Olympic medals won by previous TSU alumni.

2. PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The campus appears to be adequately serviced by its pedestrian pattern of sidewalks and paths with the majority of the parking and roadways along the perimeter of the campus limiting the conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

With the exception of student apartments, most all of the campus academic and student residencies are within a ten-minute walk of the Campus Center. The compact size of most of the campus means that automobile use is not as essential for most of the students. The only exception to this would be those student commuters living 'off-campus' or in the northeast apartment-style residents.

The link between the campus core and student apartment housing within the northeast corner of the campus should be improved. Currently, the apartments are detached due to the long walking distance and the Ed Temple Boulevard crossing. A safer more pedestrian friendly connection between the apartments and campus will better help unite these two disconnected campus zones. While pedestrian/vehicular crossings are generally safe throughout most of the main campus, safer pedestrian conditions along John A. Merritt Boulevard should be addressed.

3. STUDENT GATHERING SPACES

The most active student gathering spaces on campus are the two plazas located just west of the Campus Center and north of the Brown-Daniel Library. Although these plazas are not very large, they seem to be the center of student outdoor gathering and interaction. Outdoor seatwalls and geometrically placed shade trees have encouraged both contemplative individual moments, as well as the location for more active gatherings of student gatherings.

Each housing courtyard contains a fairly underutilized wooden gazebo gathering space. Each housing courtyard should be enhanced to encourage a greater variety of exterior experiences and social interactions.

4. OPEN SPACE QUALITY

Although the overall campus open space is attractive and very clean, the landscape elements are generally simple and monotone. Besides trees and grass lawns, there are only a few landscape flower beds on campus.

The addition of more garden spaces filled with stone outcroppings, sculpture, art, trellises, benches, flowers and ornamental grasses would provide a more pleasurable contrast to the dominant lawn open spaces.

This is especially critical as most of the lawn spaces do not look as good as they should. Unfortunately, these lawn areas are currently not irrigated and suffer through the dry seasons and do not appear as healthy and green as desired.

5. ADA COMPLIANCE

TSU utilizes the ‘American with Disabilities Act’ to guide all campus construction. The accessibility of campus buildings is addressed in Part 3.1.3.1 Building Use and Condition.