3. Georgia State University Campus Master Plan
Technical Memorandum

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Project

Georgia State University Master Plan Update

Subject

VI. Physical Master Plan & Implementation

From

Sasaki Associates/Robert and Company

To

GSU Master Planning Committee

This memorandum summarizes the 2012 Master Plan Update for Georgia State University. Significant change has occurred in the physical configuration of the Georgia State campus since preparation of its last update in 2004/2005. In response to enrollment growth and the need for high quality academic and student life space, the campus has stretched outward from its historic core between Piedmont Avenue and Peachtree Center Avenue. To the northwest, Georgia State has acquired property at the corner of Park Place and J. W. Dobbs Avenue for the proposed new Law and Business Schools. To the north, the Piedmont Avenue corridor has gained traction with the development of University Commons and the acquisition of the Piedmont North housing facility. Campus also has reached to the east across the I-75/85 interstate corridor with the acquisition of playfields and the development of a football practice facility.

Several vectors of change make this—Georgia State’s centennial year—a particularly valuable moment at which to re-evaluate the quality and fit-to-function of its buildings and to re-envision the physical configuration of the campus. Georgia State recently adopted a new Strategic Plan that maps out the institution’s major goals and initiatives for the next 5 and 10 years; the 2012 Master Plan Update is a venue for expressing the physical components of these changes. Recent and planned additions to campus such as the completion of Petit Science Center; the acquisition of 25 Park Place, 75 Piedmont Avenue, and 100 Auburn Avenue; and the proposed new Law and Business Schools will increase the campus space inventory. Planned public investment in the reconstruction of the Courtland Street viaduct as well as introduction of the streetcar to the Edgewood and Auburn Avenue corridors serve as an opening to improve mobility and the pedestrian experience on campus.
Existing Conditions

MASTER PLAN GOALS

The primary objective of the Physical Master Plan Update is to support the goals of the university's Strategic Plan and the goals and aspirations of Georgia State faculty, staff, and students as expressed through interviews and Sasaki's online MyCampus survey. The Strategic Plan goals are to:

1. Become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates
2. Significantly strengthen and grow the base of distinctive graduate and professional programs that assure development of the next generation of researchers and society leaders
3. Become a leading public research university addressing the most challenging issues of the 21st century
4. Be a leader in understanding the complex challenges of cities and developing effective solutions
5. Achieve distinction in globalizing the university

In addition to addressing the Strategic Plan goals, the Master Plan Update attends to a number of goals articulated by the university's faculty, staff, and students. These include a strong desire for physical improvements that ultimately reinforce the campus's sense of place—more convenient, safe, and attractive pedestrian connections between campus facilities, green campus landscape spaces, communal study and social spaces outdoors and within buildings, high quality classroom and laboratories, and improved student life facilities.
MASTER PLAN PROGRAM

The master plan program is a response to the university’s goal of growing from 32,000 (headcount) to 40,000 students as well as to space needed for current programs and additional space that will be needed with growth of student enrollment to 40,000 students.

Classrooms

Analysis shows there is sufficient classroom space available for the current enrollment. Existing classroom space also will be sufficient for enrollment of 40,000 students if the current classroom use can increase from the existing average of 30 hour per week to 40 hours per week.

Teaching Laboratories

An additional 10 to 15 teaching laboratories with an estimated 20,000 assignable square feet (ASF) are needed now at current enrollment for programs in the sciences, fine arts, and music. At the 40,000 student level an estimated additional 100,000 ASF of teaching laboratory space is required.

Research

In order to house the university’s goal of $100 million dollars in research from the existing $60 million, including $32 million of laboratory intensive research, the university estimates it will require an additional 229,000 ASF of research laboratory space.

Office

There is sufficient office space at present and the university’s recent acquisitions mitigate the need for additional office space with growth in enrollment, faculty, and staff.

Student Life

Given the university’s location in downtown Atlanta and assuming private participation, an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 ASF of additional student life facilities are needed now. Additional space will be needed to accommodate enrollment growth to 40,000 students.

Student Residences

The university anticipates the addition of 4,000 residential students over the next 10 to 15 years and will phase development of additional student housing in response to demand.
MASTER PLAN

Land Use

The Georgia State campus in 2012 is characterized by three districts:

- *The Campus Core District* – the traditional heart of campus consisting of two city blocks bounded by Peachtree Center Avenue, Gilmer Street, Piedmont Avenue, and Decatur Street
- *Woodruff Park District* – university facilities within one or two blocks of Woodruff Park
- *Piedmont Corridor District* – residential facilities along Piedmont Street as well as an area east of the I-75/85 corridor which the university acquired for playfields

*Campus Districts*

The 2012 Master Plan Update addresses each of these districts individually as well as the connections amongst the districts.
20.12 Master Plan Update Framework

The Campus Core District

At present the Campus Core District is the academic/student life focus of the campus. The Master Plan Update envisions that this district will remain the focus with its teaching and research facilities as well as library, student union, and recreation facilities.

The existing campus core is a dense physical configuration of buildings which presents many blank walls to the surrounding frame of public streets and sidewalks and has limited pedestrian access. The physical form of the core is a product of the university’s founding in a downtown neighborhood that has been undergoing transition. The existing configuration contributes to an unwelcoming feel that negatively impacts the campus character and the public perception of the campus. The master plan proposes a major renovation of the core with the selective/phased removal of outmoded building facilities, the introduction of an interior, landscaped greenway from Petit Science to Hurt Plaza at Peachtree Center Avenue, and new landscaped gateways. These proposed improvements will provide a more welcoming appearance, improve pedestrian circulation, and provide a series of memorable places that positively contribute to the campus identity.
Existing Campus Core District

Proposed Campus Core District
The master plan proposes the removal of Kell Hall and its adjacent plaza and underground parking, the university bookstore, and the auditorium and underground parking in front of the Urban Life building. An interior linear landscape greenway at surface grade replaces these buildings and plazas. Within the proposed greenway, the plan introduces a series of vertical structures containing elevators and stairs as a means of providing new and improved pedestrian access into the adjoining building facilities and as a place making element for the campus. With the removal of Kell Hall, the configuration of the adjoining Arts & Humanities building will permit the addition of a tier of new laboratories for the arts needed to accommodate the existing and future arts programs. The proposed greenway will provide Georgia State its first landscaped quadrangle(s) serving as safe and attractive pedestrian connections between campus buildings in the core and the much sought outdoor landscaped communal study and social spaces.

Proposed Greenway at Arts & Humanities and Sparks
Proposed Greenway at Sparks and Library

The master plan proposes the development of Gilmer Street between Peachtree Center Avenue and Piedmont Avenue as a shared street in order to facilitate pedestrian movement across to Hurt Park and Dahlberg Hall. The plan recommends new landscaped gateways into the core district and proposed greenway at the entry from Hurt Plaza, Hurt Park, and from Decatur Street at the Urban Life building. The proposed gateways will help transform the character of the core district by welcoming new students and visitors to campus.

Woodruff Park District

Existing university facilities, the recently-acquired 25 Park Place, and the proposed construction of new Business and Law Schools at 89 Park Place contribute to Georgia State’s increasing presence in the area around Robert W. Woodruff Park. Woodruff Park is the City of Atlanta’s principal downtown park. It is anticipated this beautiful public park, currently maintained by Central Atlanta Progress, will be shared increasingly by the university community. Woodruff Park with its surrounding cluster of university facilities will provide the university a unique front door for visitors and a distinctive presence within the City of Atlanta.

The acquisition of 25 Park Place and 100 Auburn Street as well as the proposed new Business and Law Schools will allow the university to consider releasing existing leased spaces in the Woodruff Park District. The university presently leases approximately 149,300 square feet of space including 34 Peachtree, the Andrew Young School, and Ten Park Place. Other existing university-owned properties that do not provide a good fit to function, such as 35 Broad Street Building housing the Robinson College of Business, could also be considered for release.
The master plan recommends improving the pedestrian relationship between the existing plaza in front of 25 Park Place to Woodruff Park and pedestrian access to the site of the Law and Business Schools by developing the existing intervening street, Park Place South, as a shared street whose predominate use is for pedestrians and the streetcar. The plan also proposes improved connections back to the core through the redevelopment of Hurt Plaza as a shared street. The new streetcar line along the Edgewood and Auburn Avenue corridors will provide the university a new alternative for east-west movement within the campus and to the Woodruff district.
**Piedmont Corridor District**

The university's existing student housing is located along the Piedmont Corridor. The master plan recommends that, for the foreseeable future, additional student housing continue to be located in the Piedmont Corridor in response to demand. This will reinforce the existing housing inventory and help to establish a stronger critical mass of student residences. In the long term, the university should explore alternative locations for additional housing districts.

Given the street-fronted alignment of the existing housing and the extended linear configuration along Piedmont Avenue, the master plan recommends the development of a mixed-use university village midway along the corridor. This proposed cluster of activity—branded as Panther Square—is envisioned as a mixed-use complex of student housing and supporting commercial services such as restaurants, bookstores, and small retail shops framing a semi-public open space. A prototypical design would place Panther Square at one of the grided intersections along the Piedmont Corridor with pedestrian traffic and access to public transportation. Flexible, multi-use buildings that house ground-level retail and student residences should frame the open space at the corner. Most blocks around Panther Square will have an internal pedestrian system connecting residential quads with academic buildings, and high-activity uses, such as academic programs, student life facilities, and commercial retail, will reinforce street edges.

Pedestrian connections from the existing and proposed student residences in the Piedmont Corridor to the rest of campus will continue to shift with planned campus improvements. The proposed classroom building element of the Business School will be an important academic destination, suggesting that J.W. Dobbs, Auburn, and Edgewood Avenues will become heavily used as a direct east-west connection from student residences to the Woodruff District. All of these rights-of-way would benefit from significant pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements. The location of the intramural fields to the east of the interstate also will draw student movement along Auburn and J. W. Dobbs Avenues eastwards under the expressway. With narrower overpass bridges, Auburn Avenue presents the more attractive eastern route under the expressway.
Proposed University Village at Panther Square Concept

Illustration of the Panther Square Concept (University Park, Cambridge, MA)
Existing Piedmont Corridor District

Proposed Piedmont Corridor District
Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation

The university is embedded within the historic street grid of downtown Atlanta and will continue to depend upon the existing street and sidewalk system for pedestrian and vehicular mobility. To date, the university has effected significant streetscape improvements to surrounding streets such as Decatur Street and Piedmont Avenue. Additional streetscape improvements are anticipated along the Atlanta Streetcar routes on Edgewood and Auburn Avenues. In addition the university should partner with Central Atlanta Progress in securing streetscape improvements for J.W. Dobbs Avenue which will become the shortest route from the student residences to the proposed new Law and Business School facilities.

The master plan proposes two significant improvements to the campus system of pedestrian circulation. First, an internal pedestrian system via the proposed greenway in the core blocks between Piedmont and Peachtree Center Avenues will establish a clearer, more pleasant route through the heart of campus. Second, transforming Park Place South, Hurt Plaza, and Gilmer Street into shared streets greatly will improve the external entries to campus and pedestrian movement.

Proposed Street Improvements and Pedestrian Connections

The existing internal pedestrian circulation route within the core is complex, confusing, and obstructed. The routing includes internal building corridors, open paved plazas, underground parking areas, and the Courtland Street viaduct underpass. The master plan recommends the greenway replace the existing internal system. The proposed greenway will be barrier-free and consist of a series of connected landscaped courtyards at grade level with new entries including vertical circulation into adjoining building facilities. The plan proposes landscaped gateways at either end of the greenway—at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and Decatur Street (diagonally across from the Petit Science Center), and at the site of the existing Kell Hall on Peachtree Center Avenue. A series of surface-level landscaped courtyards will link these
gateways. A proposed new gateway on Gilmer St at Hurt Park leads to the greenway via a new passageway between Sparks Hall and the Arts & Humanities building.

Externally, the master plan recommends the redevelopment of three public streets as shared streets: Park Place South, Hurt Plaza, and Gilmer Street between Piedmont Avenue and Peachtree Center Avenue. The plan recommends reconstruction of these streets as primarily pedestrian streets with limited vehicular access. As shared streets they would permit safe pedestrian access to Hurt Park and Dahlberg Hall across Gilmer Street, unrestricted pedestrian movement from the core to the Woodruff district via Hurt Plaza, and safe access from 25 Park Place and the proposed Law and Business Schools across Park Place South to Woodruff Park. While these existing streets are minor in the city’s street grid, limited to providing access to adjoining university buildings as opposed to collector or major arterial streets, their redevelopment as shared streets will require partnering with the City of Atlanta.

_Illustration of Shared Streets Concept (Portland, Oregon)_

_Open Space_

The existing Georgia State campus is integrated with the intense urban environment of downtown Atlanta. While both Hurt and Woodruff Parks provide some open space relief, their public nature and open character to the larger community limit their range of use by the university community. Design of the greenway recommended by the master plan provides for the campus the outdoor communal and social spaces sought by faculty, staff, and students.

The plan envisions the proposed greenway as a necklace of green landscaped quadrangles and courtyards internal to the campus core with linkages outward to the surrounding frame of public streets and public open spaces. In contrast to the surrounding paved and intense urban environment of downtown Atlanta, the vision for the greenway is one of a cool, quiet oasis of lawn and trees.
The master plan recommends two additional prototypical open spaces. A proposed semi-public open space is an integral element of the proposed university village, Panther Square, in the Piedmont Corridor District. Second, the master plan recommends future development of the traditional Atlanta block incorporates an internal landscaped courtyard or quadrangle (rather than street-fronted buildings with landscape foregrounds or front yard plazas). The master plan illustrates this concept for the development of the remainder of the research block.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the 2012 Master Plan will take two tracks. One track is the phased implementation of elements wholly controlled by the university as funding and circumstances permit. The other track is implementation of those elements that require partnering with the city, Central Atlanta Progress, or other public entities.

Space Use

Recent property acquisitions and proposed building programs provide the university a significant opportunity to comprehensively re-evaluate space assignments and the quality of its space with respect to fit-to-function and will provide the university the opportunity to release existing leased spaces and perhaps some properties currently owned by the university. Georgia State along with all the institutions in the University System of Georgia will be undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of space using fall 2012 enrollment data. The Board recently has updated the room coding system and has developed new space-use metrics for this evaluation. Presently the university leases approximately 149,000 square feet of space. Also, the development of the proposed Greenway requires removal of the existing space in Kell Hall, the bookstore, and the auditorium at the Urban Life building totaling 182,700 assignable square feet.

The master plan recommends the university undertake a comprehensive and immediate evaluation of its building space under the new system. This analysis will help support the reassignment of space as appropriate, removal of older facilities such as Kell Hall, divestiture of
leased spaces that are no longer required, and scheduling of renovation funds for remaining buildings.

**Greenway**

The proposed linear greenway can develop in phases as circumstances and funding permit. The total estimated cost of developing the greenway is estimated between $40 and $50 million. As a next step the university should carry out a comprehensive architectural study to confirm the project’s feasibility and cost.

Removal of Kell Hall, its associated plaza, and its replacement with a landscaped courtyard is estimated to cost $5 million. The estimated costs include demolition and the cost of the new landscape. The new building costs associated with the addition of a tier of needed studios/laboratories on the south face of the Arts & Humanities building is an additional cost. In this block the concept illustrates a continuous porch structure along the south face of the Arts & Humanities and Sparks Hall buildings as a means of re-facing the buildings and providing new access from the interior landscape courtyards. A suggested cascade of steps will connect the upper plaza at the General Classroom Building to the proposed new landscaped courtyard. Glazed vertical structures containing elevators and stairs are integrated strategically with existing structures in order to provide necessary vertical access into the adjoining buildings and from the reconstructed Courtland Street viaduct.

Demolition of the university bookstore and annex, and College of Law auditorium in the core block bounded by Piedmont Avenue and Courtland Street is estimated to cost approximately $15-20 million. Costs include demolition, re-facing of buildings, and new landscape.

**Panther Square**

The concept of a university village branded Panther Square will require land assembly within the Piedmont Corridor. The concept envisions coupling the need for additional student housing and student life facilities such as food service, an expanded bookstore, and other supporting retail services. These uses would be housed in a village configuration with buildings framing a communal open space.

**Courtland Street Viaduct**

The reconstruction of the Courtland Street viaduct provides the university an important opportunity to recast the existing industrial character of the viaduct to become a more pedestrian-friendly and visually attractive facility. The master plan recommends reduction of the existing four travel lanes on the viaduct to three travel lanes, broader sidewalks with bus plazas at the principal crossing on both sides of the street, introduction of light wells to bring daylight down to the surface below the viaduct, and reconfiguration of the supporting structure shown in the preliminary engineering drawings in order to broaden the pedestrian passageway below. The plan recommends vertical circulation including stairs and an elevator adjacent to the viaduct at Sparks Hall to provide access to and from the viaduct surface to the greenway below and additional elevator access for Sparks Hall.
Courtland Street Viaduct Reconstruction

Shared Streets

The master plan recommends redevelopment of Hurt Plaza between Peachtree Center Avenue and Park Place South, Park Place South between Edgewood Avenue and J. W. Dobbs Avenue, and Gilmer Street between Peachtree Center Avenue and Piedmont Avenue as shared streets. Since these are public streets the university will need to partner with the city in their redesign as pedestrian-focused streets.

On a daily basis, these existing streets are the principal pedestrian routes for over 30,000 students in their movement to and from the university's classroom and office facilities. None of the three
streets are major arterials or collector streets and the street faces are dominated by university facilities. Shared streets typically are designed for primary pedestrian use by the provision of pedestrian lighting, shade, and elimination of curbs and other obstructions to pedestrian movement. While open to service and emergency vehicles, they may be entirely closed to general vehicular traffic, or general vehicular traffic may be limited to certain times of the day. Designated bicycle lanes typically are on shared streets.

The redesign of Hurt Plaza will support the principal pedestrian route from the academic core to university facilities framing Woodruff Park. Redesign of Park Place South will respond to the university’s acquisition of 25 Park Place and the proposed location of the Law and Business Schools. Redesign of Gilmer Street between Peachtree Center Avenue and Gilmer will permit unrestricted pedestrian movement across Gilmer Street from Dahlberg Hall and Hurt Park.