

Appendix B: A Vision for the Campus

A VISION FOR THE CAMPUS



Washington Overlooking Campus Parkway

University of Washington Campus Plan

April 1999

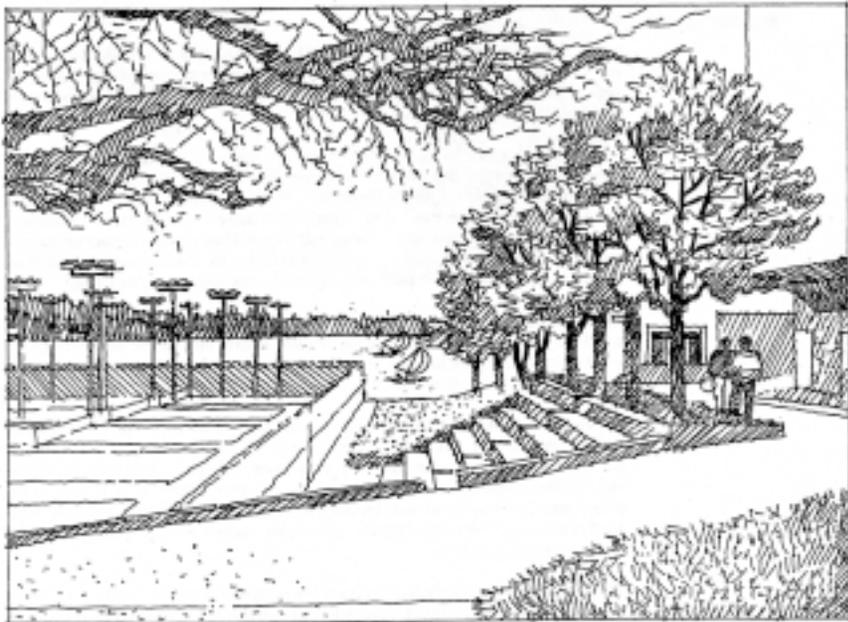
Introduction

The University of Washington is working on a new Campus Master Plan that will guide the physical development of the Seattle campus from 2002 to 2012. In order to understand the elements of the campus valued by the community, the University undertook the Visioning Project, soliciting input from students, faculty, staff, and the University District community as a basis for the Master Plan. The full study is included in the Master Plan as an Appendix, but this summary highlights some of the points of consensus found through the Visioning Project. The following quote from the report illustrates the intent of the project:

“Previous UW planning efforts have developed a great deal of data about patterns of use and space and facility needs of UW programs and activities. These include transportation studies, building square foot needs, and the capacity of open spaces to accommodate new buildings, etc. The goal of this study is not to replicate this work but to provide insight into factors less fully studied and known, the perceptions and values of the campus community about the contributions of the campus to the work of the University.”

Visioning Process

The visioning process was based on surveys and focus groups, with the intent of learning how different groups use the campus and perceive its value. Questions emphasized open space and the outdoor environment, because the vision was intended to address the common spaces of the campus. The survey was not intended as a rigorous scientific study, but an attempt at a broader understanding of the influence of the physical environment, and the value that it holds for different members of the University community and its neighbors.



Eastern view from Graves Building

The Visioning Project was led by faculty in the Department of Landscape Architecture. The faculty were guided by an advisory committee made up of faculty, staff, and community representatives. Input was solicited through distributed surveys, web site surveys and focus groups. The surveys were distributed in the spring through fall of 1998 and also posted on an interactive website. Six two-hour focus groups were held over the summer of 1998 in different areas of the campus. A total of 1,882 surveys were completed and over 100 faculty, students, staff and community members attended the focus group sessions, providing a rich multiplicity of viewpoints in regard to the campus.

The visioning process was designed to ensure not only a voice for members of the University community and its neighbors, but also to incorporate and understand the less tangible, but essential qualities of the campus environment. The report states how this type of input can contribute to the creation of the Master Plan:

“... a goal of master planning should be to develop buildings and circulation patterns within an open space matrix that is functionally efficient, aesthetically and emotionally rich and supportive and provides inspiration, delight and other intangible qualities to the spirit that either tangibly or intangibly, overtly or covertly, contribute to the quality of the lives of the campus community and in so doing promote the institution’s mission of teaching, research and service through providing a setting for this work that is a high quality environment.”



Observatory

April 1999

Summary of Results

The surveys and focus groups showed a strong consensus on a number of points:

The quality of the campus is highly valued by the University community and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Overwhelming numbers of every group (95 to 98%) reported that they believe that the open space and landscape on the campus is of significant importance, and that the campus environment makes a strong impact on the quality of life. This is true for members of the surrounding neighborhoods as well as for the University community. Comments express the mutual connection between the quality of the environment and the quality of the programs at the University. The following quotes are representative of comments from focus groups and written responses to the survey:

“Outstanding students and teachers have many choices for their work and education. The environment was a major factor in my decision to come here.”

“ In the hectic world of medical academia someplace quiet and peaceful, a place to retreat to, is important. It helps one’s sanity.”

Given the strong and widely voiced opinions regarding the quality of the campus, the Master Plan should be emphatic in its role of preserving the character of the campus, because it is clear that the issues at stake in modifying the physical environment are not merely superficial aesthetics or utilitarian convenience but are of tremendous concern to the community. The character of the University’s campus contribute directly to the central mission of the institution by affecting the creativity and productivity of the faculty, students and staff.



Rainier Vista

Regional views and vistas were sources of inspiration

It was clear from the survey results that all segments of the campus and local community found the campus to be a source of inspiration (faculty 96.5%, staff 94.8%, community members 92.0%, students via web 90.6%, student paper survey 79.3%). These responses also indicate that those with a longer term relationship with the campus, such as faculty, staff, and community members, had a deeper concern for quality of the campus than the students, who are on campus for a more limited time.

By a wide margin, the place most frequently cited as inspiring was Rainier Vista. (faculty 39.0%, staff 37.6%, community members 45.6%, students 29.8%). The Quad and general views of the mountains and water were also reported as sources of inspiration. The setting, and the power of nature override the built environment of the campus as a source of inspiration. This correlates to the often mentioned “Mt. Rainier factor” in attracting faculty and students to our campus.

The majority of respondents were inspired by the regional surroundings, and many of the written comments noted that the connection to the natural environment improved their state of mind in a stressful academic environment:

“The view can be incredible and inspiring. Just walking through the groves of trees can allow a sense of escape from the hectic dealings with faculty and students and allow me to regain my balance and perspective.”

The outdoors and views provide relief from work pressures. The feeling of ‘campus’ is strengthened by the environment.”

Frequently mentioned spaces tended to be large, central areas

The Quad, Rainier Vista, and to lesser extents, the HUB yard and Red Square were the most frequently mentioned places to visit on a sunny day by all groups. Active spaces such as the HUB yard and Red Square received frequent mention by students, but were little favored by staff. The waterfront was mentioned more often by staff, presumably because there is a larger group of staff affiliated with the south campus. The community residents showed a similar ranking, but were the only respondents to give significant mention to the Burke Museum and the Henry Gallery.

The variety of sizes and types of open spaces is a strength

While the large and well known spaces generated a good deal of response, many people were attached to smaller, intimate green spaces such as Grieg Garden, the Herb Garden and the Sylvan Theater. The variety of open spaces is valued, offering a wide range of opportunities and experiences for the different needs and moods of those on campus.

Favorite spaces tended to be clearly defined

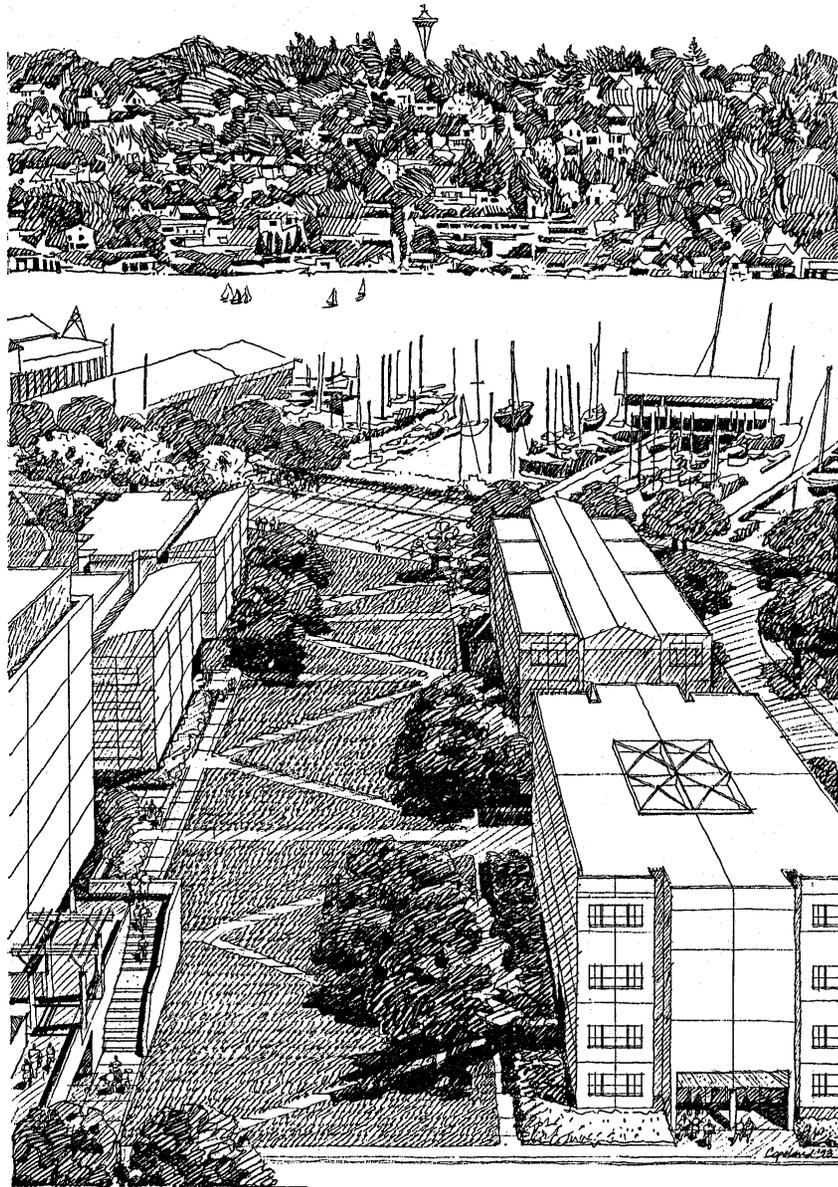
The landscape and buildings are inseparable, and clearly defined open spaces are outdoor “rooms” created by edges of buildings or distinctive landscape which are most often mentioned as favorite places. The spaces which are frequently mentioned as valued spaces are clearly defined - the Quad by the collegiate Gothic buildings and the Rainier Vista by both built and landscaped edges. Spaces such as the Archery Range that are well defined but not strongly connected to the campus open space network were not mentioned in the surveys.

There is little support for building on the prominent open spaces.

Greater, but not overwhelming support was indicated for building outside of the campus core in areas such as Campus Parkway and the east campus recreational fields.



Herb Garden



Aerial view of Portage Bay and Southwest Campus

The quality of entrances is poor, especially along 15th.

Traditionally, 15th Avenue has been treated as the western edge of the campus. The current ambivalence regarding the relationship between the campus to the east and the mix of uses to the west needs to be addressed and better defined. In addition, the existing entrances along 15th do not currently live up to their potential as gateways from the University District to the campus.

People are attracted to places on campus where historic buildings are set in the landscape.

Responses show that areas with the traditional campus form of buildings set within landscaped open space, such as Denny Yard, were preferred over “research park” environments, such as the health sciences complex. People seem to value the expansive feeling of open spaces on the campus.



Physics/Astronomy Buildings

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Directives for Master Planning

Given the direct responses to the survey as well as written comments and the discussions of the focus groups, a number of opportunities can be extrapolated for incorporation into the Master Plan.

Conserve, preserve and enhance the valued open spaces of the campus.

The plan should recognize the importance of the common life that occurs on campus by conserving valued spaces. An important component of the plan will be to ensure the preservation of the campus' major open spaces.

Create new open spaces with expected development.

New development considered in the plan should occur as part of the creation of new open spaces supportive of the common life of the University. This new open space should address the qualities that were valued in the visioning report. The west campus will offer opportunities to expand a network of open spaces on the campus.

Strengthen definition and character of existing open spaces.

The plan should look for opportunities to improve those open spaces that do not currently live up to their potential. All new development should improve, rather than detract from, campus open spaces. The plan should also look for mechanisms to improve landscaping and open space without associated development.

Preserve views and vistas.

The plan should reinforce the views and vistas towards the water and the mountains. New development, where appropriate, should enhance and direct views and vistas.



Liberal Arts Quad

Emphasize regional qualities for a unique campus.

In addition to the views and vistas that are unique to the campus, other elements that contribute to the campus' sense of place within the region should be encouraged. The climate and vegetation of the Northwest can be expressed in the architecture and in the landscape design and materials.

Create stronger connections to the waterfront.

Lake Washington and the Ship Canal are important assets to the campus, but need to be better connected to the central campus both visually and physically. The pedestrian routes toward the water in the east campus need improvement, and connections between the central and south campus could be made much stronger. One faculty member noted that:

“The waterfront/Ship Canal areas of campus should be better connected. This area and the southwest area of campus appear to be the ugly areas of campus that are not connected to the upper parts of campus.”

Also relevant is that when community members were asked which of three facilities would most benefit the general community, 62% preferred increased access to Lake Washington and the Ship Canal.

Pay attention to the edges and entries to the campus.

The edges and entries are important to both the campus community and the neighborhood. The edges of the University should be both defined and inviting. The areas where the edge should be green and where the edge should be open need to be clarified in the plan.

Retain a variety of types and sizes of open spaces.

Different types of open spaces support varying activities, and the campus should offer a wide variety of kinds of open space,

including small green places with seating, gathering places, active social spaces, intimate meditative spaces, opportunities for recreation, and places to enjoy views, eat lunch and come into casual contact with others. Newly created open spaces should reflect this variety, but all spaces and the connections between them should reflect a high level of quality.

Develop a compelling architectural language for urban portions of the campus.

In addition to the beloved quadrangles of the central campus, the plan faces the challenge of promoting attractive buildings and memorable open spaces west of 15th Avenue in areas that have traditionally been part of the urban grid.

New development should not deteriorate the valued open space, landscape and vistas, but should contribute to the quality of the campus environment.

While it was clear in the survey that the valued open space should not be used as building sites, the plan should look for ways in which development can be an asset to the campus. Buildings that are now considered as detractions to the campus environment could be replaced with better buildings, surface parking can be replaced with a combination of new building and open space, and underutilized places at the campus periphery can be knit into the campus with green, pleasant pedestrian routes.

Consider alternative methods to accommodating growth.

Many respondents suggested looking at options for accommodating growth other than new construction. Of options listed in the survey, the alternative chosen by all survey groups for accommodating growth was to increase evening classes. Other options included distance learning, using buildings outside the University District, building within current open spaces and building within the University District outside of the campus core.