

Historical Narrative for Southeastern Master Plan Process

In 1999, The Facility Planning Group at Southeastern Louisiana University embarked upon a master planning process with the understanding that a framework was necessary to guide an ever-evolving campus for the long term. We retained the services of Holly & Smith Architects APAC and Architects Southwest Inc. to assist us in this important project. The planning team was committed to defining key elements that would reflect a clear vision for the future and through an open process that achieved the goals of the academic community and facility infrastructure. This approach created a series of initiatives that lent guidance in the areas of physical environment, organization, character, and image.

The Master Plan Document projected and envisioned new structures and reorganized the spaces between the places. It offered a physical view of the future that was reinforced with design guidelines and a defined design vocabulary that addressed facades, fenestrations, landscaping, roof systems, exterior building elements and material preferences with configurations and techniques that addressed the “Southeastern” character. These definitions make up the image requirements that define the campus going forward.

In addition to attending to the character definition guidelines, the master plan organized and suggested that the scale of the campus should develop using a process of coding in the areas of frontage, pedestrian circulation, vehicular circulation, open space configurations, and streetscape / landscape recommendations. These codes make up the framework for the development of the campus infrastructure going forward.

We use these typologies as a means to guide designers in the process of developing new and renovated spaces within the campus so that the campus will, in the words of the well know campus planner, Richard Dober *“celebrate a sense of place; communicate the institution’s purpose, presence, and domain; and generate an image charged with symbolism, graced by history”*.

We believe that master plans are snap shots in time and while the guidelines that were initially embraced remained the same, there are influences that occur that cause the master plan to morph in details but not vision. In 2009, we embarked upon a process that updated the master plan. The Updated 2009 Master Plan addressed priorities that had shifted, and was influenced by new construction that had taken place. The revised document updated accomplishments, redefined priorities for new and renovated facilities, and identified structures that were slated for demolition. Future major construction placeholders were redefined and these refinements were inserted in specific areas where clarity had been reached. In order to make it more of a tool, the master plan was presented in a digital document with multiple layers that allowed insertion of improvements to the campus as they occurred. This accomplishment has allowed the university to keep the master plan current as a live working document as work develops and is completed.

In 2013 we took another step forward with an update similar to that of the 2009 Master Plan Update using the same approaches and means to refine the vision of the campus. The guidelines still remain in place yet the physical plan has been further defined. The physical document addressed the current thinking relative to priorities and took another step in expanding the master plan that included the past, present and long range needs for technology. The fiber loop, which resulted in an Information Management Plan, has now been included in the master plan package that outlines the needs and intentions of the campus for the next ten years.

In addition to the technology plan, the newly updated master plan includes a review of Deferred Maintenance process for the entire campus. These initiatives have better defined the decision making process for the planning and implementation as funds allow.

The Master Plan is a living document to help guide future direction, but is also a tool for day to day decisions.