



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development

Date: February 17, 2009

To: Council Member Betsy Hodges
Intergovernmental Relations Committee Chair

Subject: The University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus Master Plan 2009

Recommendation: Approve comments to the University of Minnesota regarding their draft Twin Cities Campus Master Plan 2009

Department Information

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Presenters in Committee:	Joseph Bernard

Financial Impact

- No financial impact

Community Impact

- Neighborhood Notification
- City Goals
- Comprehensive Plan

Supporting Information

For the past three years the University has been working on a new Master Plan that will guide improvements to the Twin Cities campus over the next ten to twenty years. City staff was invited to comment on the plan during a public review period lasting from February 6th, through February 20th, 2009. This report includes a summary of the main issues identified by City staff during the review period, and an attachment details those issues through comments on individual portions of the Master Plan.

The University area is home to one of the largest concentrations of employment in the state and is a major asset to the City of Minneapolis and the surrounding metropolitan area. Identified in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* as a Growth Center, the University creates significant land use, economic, transportation, housing and cultural impacts on the city and region. While the University functions as a semi-autonomous body, it is part of an urban fabric that encompasses a wide variety of stakeholders. This situation requires the balancing of diverse issues, interests, and priorities.

Community Partnerships and Engagement

Throughout the plan document, the University identifies a number of situations in which it desires to partner with a variety of stakeholders. City staff commends the University for including language that will hopefully lead to stronger partnerships between stakeholders. City staff also notes the recommendation that certain areas of the University need more detailed study, and looks forward to working with the University and the greater community on these issues.

While the University makes strides in trying to connect with the community at large, there are a few areas of the plan that City staff feel could be improved. A more open planning process moving forward is desired, and while the University has suggested as much in this document, input into its content seems to have come from a very narrowly defined group of stakeholders. The details surrounding public participation used to develop this plan are unclear, and the timeline for providing public comment is very brief. The University could begin their commitment to partnerships by taking a step back from the plan and leaving ample time for community input. Moving forward, there are many details that need to be worked out regarding how these partnerships will operate, and who will be held accountable for their performance.

Sustainability

The sustainability elements of the plan are impressive and dovetail nicely with policies adopted by the City Council in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. Recommendations to respect views of the Mississippi River, address stormwater management issues, reduce surface parking lots, and use land and space efficiently are all strongly supported by a variety of City policies. The plan leaves in question the fate of several historic buildings on campus. We encourage the University to also look at this as a sustainability measure as detailed in the discussion below.

Historic Preservation

City staff strongly recommends the University of Minnesota not demolish properties designated or eligible for designation as historic properties on local, state, and national registers of historic properties. Planned demolitions and development on the Knoll are especially troubling. The City strongly recommends the University adhere to local and federal standards for the treatment of historic properties when planning new construction and modifications to existing buildings within this area. In the event that changes must be made to the historic landscape of the campus, staff welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the University in identifying solutions that will benefit the community at large.

The efficient use of land should be called into question when considering the fate of historic structures on the University campus. This is especially true when scarce land resources within the City are proposed for future University expansion. If buildings are demolished on campus, replacement of that space should occur within the current footprint of the University.

Job Growth

The City plays a significant role in maintaining and expanding the physical infrastructure that contributes to Minneapolis' competitive advantage in attracting, retaining and growing businesses. An example of increased infrastructure investment is the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI) Area. The construction of stormwater management facilities, open space and a reconnected street system will support a new mix of uses north of University Avenue while providing opportunities for significant job growth in the area. That reconnected street system includes Granary Road which is referenced in the University draft document.

The East Gateway area of the University offers great potential for synergistic job growth with the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial area. The development of Granary Road will

mutually benefit the University and City by helping to attain goals for job growth in the area. Some portions of the plan lack detail on how this will occur, in part because Granary Road is a work in progress. Regardless, City staff encourages the University to place greater emphasis on the need for Granary Road and on the role that the University should play in making it a reality.

Transportation

With the pending implementation of Central Corridor light rail, the recent construction of a new stadium, and a general vision for growth in jobs and housing in the University area, a wide variety of transportation challenges face the community. The University addresses these challenges by prioritizing mass transit, bicycles, and pedestrians over auto traffic. While placing emphasis on alternative modes of travel fits well with a variety of City adopted policies, City staff notes that the plan does not properly address the needs of auto travel to and through the University or the infrastructure necessary to accommodate it.

There are additional specific concerns regarding elements of the transportation plan. Many improvements to transportation infrastructure that are suggested by the University occur on City of Minneapolis or Hennepin County right of way. Collaboration with the City on these recommendations is imperative as the recommendations do not indicate a course of action on how to accomplish them. Additionally, a clear sense of the partnership that could emerge from these recommendations is critical. Questions so far left unanswered are who will pay for these improvements, and if they occur on City right of way, where is the community input to validate the proposal? As has been previously mentioned, the mutual benefit to be had through projects like Granary Road and the East River Road extension deserve additional discussion in the plan.

Land Use and Expansion

The recently adopted *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* outlines a number of land use features in and around the University of Minnesota. Identified as a Growth Center, the University area is seen as a place where employment and residential populations will continue to grow. Community and Commercial Corridors, Neighborhood Commercial Nodes, Activity Centers, and a variety of Small Area Plans blanket the area around the University and guide future activity in the community.

The City of Minneapolis has adopted policies and identified development objectives through a number of land use plans near the University:

- The Minneapolis Plan
- The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth
- The Master Plan for the Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood
- Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI)/Bridal Veil Refined Master Plan
- The Cedar Riverside Small Area Plan
- University Avenue SE & 29th Avenue SE Development Objectives and Design Guidelines
- Franklin-Cedar/Riverside Transit Oriented Development Master Plan
- Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan
- Minneapolis Critical Area Plan

While much of the growth outlined by the University plan is appropriate in the context of City adopted land use plans and features, sensitivity to the City's traditional neighborhoods should be further examined. The University Master Plan has acknowledged the need to address community concerns regarding encroachment of campus activities into the surrounding neighborhoods. The City of Minneapolis future land use map does not include a land use category entitled "area of influence" as shown in the University plan. Many of these areas of influence are actually designated as "urban neighborhoods" in City documents. Consistency in terminology and definitions of land use features would promote compatibility between land uses.

The University attempts to address these concerns by including what it calls in the text a “Regent’s Boundary” – which is not clearly identified on any map. Instead “sensitive edges” are shown on various maps to illustrate locations where the built environment of the University interacts with the greater community. City staff commends the acknowledgement that the back yard of the University is in many instances the front yard of the surrounding neighborhoods. More attention needs to be paid to this situation in the future, and City staff looks forward to addressing this issue in conjunction with the University and emerging partnerships like the University District Partnership Alliance.

An action plan is necessary to move this portion of the document forward. While the plan attempts to identify a boundary that accommodates future expansion, the text leaves much room for interpretation and amendment to the area of expansion. As the plan seems to allow for flexibility of future expansion areas, a process needs to be outlined for determining how further expansion will occur. This process should have clear responsibilities, expectations, and evaluative measures that consider the input of a variety of impacted stakeholders.

Two projects identified in the plan are of specific interest and concern to City staff. The need for an additional or replacement steam plant near campus could have a major impact on City functions near the University. City staff recommends collaborating with various stakeholders in this process as early as possible. Expansion plans to the east of campus near Huron Boulevard SE and Fulton Street SE requires additional attention in the plan. Further work needs to be done on what constitutes “context sensitive” design, including guidelines that determine how these transition areas will be treated.

A number of questions remain that are related to this issue. Will there be a rational and predetermined public process? What kind of community engagement will the University commit to in regards to expansion? With the recent adoption of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*, City staff has outlined a process that allows property owners to apply for an alteration to the adopted policy therein. City staff encourages the University to adopt a similar process for amending their plan policies, and further recommends that the University apply to amend the City’s comprehensive plan in areas where proposed expansion is at odds with adopted City land use policy. Addressing these issues will show that the University is serious about engaging the input of stakeholders in the area.

City staff would like to thank the University of Minnesota for the opportunity to comment on the plan, and the Minneapolis City Council for their attention to this report. We look forward to collaborating with the University on projects that will benefit the area’s stakeholders into the future.

Attachments

- The University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus Master Plan 2009 – In an effort to conserve paper, the plan is available online in digital format at the University of Minnesota web site (http://www.cppm.umn.edu/masterplan_mpdraft.html).
- Detailed Master Plan Comments from City Staff