

SUNY New Paltz Report by the Campus Facilities Planning Task Force

In May 2007 President Steven Poskanzer convened a Campus Facilities Planning Task Force, whose charge may be reviewed in Appendix 1 and whose members are listed in Appendix 2. Together with architects and landscape architects from Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut, & Kuhn and Wallace, Roberts & Todd, the Task Force worked during the fall of 2007 to draft a conceptual master plan for the campus.

In order to fulfill our charge, we worked first to characterize the distinctive qualities and identity of the SUNY New Paltz campus; then to articulate design principles; and finally, to arrive at judgments regarding the specific components of our charge.

In December, the task force began presenting this draft to campus groups. While individual task force representatives had freely discussed the plan with their respective constituents, the Task Force elected not to make formal presentations until a draft plan was complete, believing that a complete draft would be most meaningful and coherent to our audiences. We then made a series of presentations to the College Council; the faculty; the President's cabinet; the "Wonk" group of deans, administrators, and representatives of the Development and Technology teams; CSEA; Council 82; PEF; NYSCOBAs; ALES; the Environmental Task Force; and administrative staff of the Research Foundation. We further made presentations of the plan to the Town Gown group, and held a public meeting for residents of New Paltz.

After each of these presentations, the Task Force invited and encouraged responses to the plan. We announced at the February 8 presentation to the Academic Senate and the faculty that comments would be accepted through March 14. (That date was extended to March 24.) On February 29, we posted the draft plan on mynewpaltz.edu; the plan was shortly thereafter also available on the college website. We held an additional meeting on March 14 to enable members of the community to ask questions about and discuss the plan.

At the end of the comment period, the Task Force had received about fifty written comments from members of the campus community. The majority of these comments expressed appreciation for the work of the Task Force and commended its overall plan to make the campus greener and more aesthetically pleasing. Many commentators also explicitly appreciated the opportunity to offer feedback on the plan. About twelve commentators wrote either with the sole purpose of expressing approval of the plan or devoted only a small part of their text to suggestions for changes. Other commentators offered detailed suggestions or opinions. These will be characterized below.

Stella Deen distributed all written comments to each member of the Task Force, and on April 4 we met to discuss and make decisions with respect to the feedback. These decisions are reflected in our revised master plan and final recommendations to President Poskanzer.

Consultation

In response to a request from a faculty member, the Task Force devoted some time at its April 4th meeting to reviewing and discussing our consultation of campus and off-campus groups. Task Force members thought they had consulted appropriately, especially

given time the burden of time constraints and its mission. Members reflected on the value of the breadth of the body's initial membership, and early agreement on central values iterated in the plan. Members also reflected on their ongoing discussions with their constituent groups from the beginning of the planning process on their mission, on the core values emerging from deliberations, and on the plan being envisioned as it was taking shape. (Minutes of the task force April 4th meeting)

Nonetheless, because we knew that reconfiguration of parking on campus would be of concern to many in the community, we ought to have expressed more frequently understanding when such concerns were voiced at meetings as well as reassurance that the Task Force would continue to deliberate the merits and flaws of ideas concerning changes to parking.

Endorsing Good Ideas

1. The Task Force wishes to endorse several proposals that fall outside the scope of our charge. The first is a call by the Fine and Performing Arts Council for a "Public Art Initiative Committee." We would recommend that such a committee be called the Art and Aesthetics Committee and that it 1) make recommendations to incorporate public art into the design of buildings and open spaces; 2) enhance performance programming in outdoor spaces on campus; and 3) work with the Design and Construction team to recommend design standards for fixtures across campus.

2. Several respondents to the call for feedback asked how decisions were made about programming for new buildings. We recognize that there is little understanding of this process, and we request that President Poskanzer educate and involve the campus community in discussion of it, perhaps initially through the Budget, Goals, and Planning Committee.

Feedback

The Task Force received comments from members of the campus community about the following aspects of the plan: the possibility of converting the College Terrace into a police station; the possibility of re-opening the Southside entrance to campus; the poor visibility of the west entrance to campus; the location of the science building on the corner of Plattekill and Route 32; the possibility of including bike paths on campus; the safety and conditions of sidewalks; lighting; plants; access to buildings by the disabled; the possibility of moving the Children's Center in the future; greening the campus; signage on campus; art on campus. To no one's surprise, we received many comments about parking on campus.

Of those who submitted comments about our provisional plans to consolidate parking on the perimeters of the campus, about ten commentators approved and about fourteen respondents expressed concerns about or offered suggestions with respect to one or more of the following: shuttle service; parking near offices and classrooms; visitor, museum, and theatre parking; deliveries; dedicated lots for specific groups; accessible parking; and the timing of the proposed expansion to the Route 32 lot.

The Task Force received comments and questions from members of the New Paltz community about the following aspects of the plan:

Traffic and Parking patterns

- How will the reconfiguration of parking lots on campus affect on-street parking surrounding the campus?
- Will community members experience traffic congestion at the intersection of Route 32 and Plattekill? The town might consider installing a roundabout or a traffic light here.
- Will the expanded Route 32 parking lot make the crossing to campus unsafe?
- Several residents expressed a desire that the former Southside entrance on the west side of the campus remain closed.
- How will on-campus parking accommodate older and disabled visitors, students, faculty and staff?

The Proposed Science Building

- Several residents encouraged us to design a building whose proportions would be appropriate for this environment of single-family homes, for example, a two-story building.

Environmental Impact Statements

- The county planner suggested that the college consider preparing a generic environmental impact statement rather than several individual, redundant environmental studies for each individual project.

Connections between Campus and Town

- An Elting Library employee asked that we ensure that copies of any planning documents be sent to the local library for those who do not have online access to the reports.
- The community should be kept informed about pool access and the construction schedule for its replacement. Local swim groups depend on our campus pool for their activities.
- One resident regretted the insular nature of the plan, noting that it does not consider how the campus might relate to the surrounding village. Village, town and county planning board representatives who were present stated that they should have been included in the planning process earlier on.

Responding to Feedback

Two respondents recommended that the **Children's Center** not be moved and that the building not be razed. We wish to acknowledge these concerns and underscore that there are no definitive plans to take down this building or move the Children's Center.

Suggestions for **signage** on campus will be referred to Design & Construction.

The Task Force hopes that bicyclists on campus will be encouraged by an increased number of bicycle racks on campus as well as by broader and well maintained paths. In addition, **bicycle travel** will be promoted by secondary paths flanking primary pedestrian paths in the master plan. However, we do not believe it feasible to formally segregate pedestrian and bicycle traffic on campus.

The Task Force believes that **shuttle service** will alleviate many of the expressed concerns about how commuters can reach buildings 1) from remote parking lots; 2) when carrying heavy bags; or 3) in inclement weather. John Shupe will meet with Adirondack Trailways and UCAT to discuss shuttle options.

Recommendations of the Task Force

1. That SUNY New Paltz offer shuttle service within campus from parking to buildings as well as service to connect the campus to the New Paltz bus terminal.
2. That funds be set aside for expediting the design of the parking lot expansion proposed east of Route 32, so that construction can begin on relatively short notice as future construction requires the temporary or permanent closing of existing lots.
3. That Facilities conduct ongoing study of the impact of construction on parking.
4. That the Parking Committee conduct detailed study and make recommendations concerning parking policy on campus.
5. That a new lot near the Welcome Center (visible in the plan as a parking lot behind a new building adjacent to HAB) be designated for accessible and visitor parking only. The revised plan indicates how accessible parking needs will be met throughout campus (see slide 30), but should be further revised to indicate the exclusively accessible and visitor parking planned for this lot.
6. That the draft plan be revised to propose a way to alleviate pedestrian-vehicular conflict in the lot behind JFT, LC, and STL. (This recommendation still needs to be incorporated into the revised plan.)
7. That the master plan not include specific recommendations for the design of lighting, benches and waste receptacles; that the Design and Construction

Department make decisions regarding such standards, in consultation with an Arts and Aesthetics Committee.

8. That a site analysis be conducted for the Terrace Building, especially because of its placement on a bluff with clear sightlines to Mohonk.

Submitted by Stella Deen and John Shupe
Campus Facilities Planning Task Force Co-chairs
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