

# University Master Plan to Shape Campus Growth

UNC officials hired Ayers-Saint Gross, a Baltimore architectural firm, to implement the Master Plan.

By KIM MINUGH  
University Editor

The Master Plan looks impressive on paper.

New buildings, increased green space and thinned traffic. Hidden parking decks, modern science facilities and an arts complex.

It almost sounds too good to be true.

But the highly ambitious and innovative plan is more than just a blueprint for campus growth – it's designed to be a guiding force in UNC's future.

"The plan should be kind of both a map and a compass – it will help with the location of future buildings but will also be a flexible road map for the campus in terms of aesthetics, environment and space," said Adam Gross, partner with Ayers-Saint Gross, the architecture firm hired by the University to implement the Master Plan.

"The plan is intended to be prescriptive about where the buildings go but also flexible and almost more spiritual in design."

Master Plan officials say the plan's purpose is to direct inevitable University growth, preventing runaway sprawl and striving to maintain the ambiance so dear to the UNC community.

"If your campus knows how it would like to develop, then you have something to follow for short-term growth," said Judith Pulley, vice president of academic planning for the UNC system.

"You need to think about what facilities are compatible and aesthetically pleasing for maintaining the beauty of the campus."

The concept of a master plan is nothing foreign to UNC. Officials first conjured up a campus blueprint in the 1920s to design South Building, Wilson Library and the area encompassing Polk Place.

A series of plans were written and then discarded in years to come, including one that was rejected by the late Chancellor Michael Hooker when he took office in 1995.

But officials say this one is special. It's not like the others.

It's more than just a plan.

"The Master Plan will serve the University for 10 to 20 years in the future because someone will come along with ideas," said Jonathan Howes, director of the Master Plan. "The plan provides sites for things to occur."

David Pardue, secretary for the Board of Trustees and a former member of the Master Plan Executive Steering Team, said the plan's long-term scope will curb ill thought-out construction on campus. "It's a long-term plan that will ensure that construction will be done in as pleasing a way as possible," he said. "Historically, we haven't done as good a job in laying out buildings."

Efforts to strategically place buildings call to mind the sporadic and disconnected layout of South Campus – often considered one of UNC's most infamous eyesores. "The Master Plan will make campus more aesthetically pleas-

ing and correct mistakes made by a lack of planning – like South Campus," Chancellor James Moeser said.

Pardue agreed that South Campus is in need of attention and said it is living motivation to plan ahead. "I realize that South Campus will never be as beautiful as North Campus, but we can do a better job than we've done."

Jim Leloudis, director of the James M. Johnston Center for Undergraduate Excellence, said rapid growth in the University's past now haunts the future, creating an obstacle to successful growth.

"Some of the growth was done without plans – I'm not sure they were thinking back then," said Leloudis, who has done extensive research on the history of UNC's campus. "The Master Plan has put a lot of time in, through the experience of the designers, to enhance the growth."

And with Chapel Hill residents putting pressure on UNC to stay within its existing boundaries, officials realize that growth will have to be harnessed.

Board of Governors member John Sanders, also a member of the Master Plan Executive Steering Team, said dwindling land space at UNC demands a plan.

"It's necessary because we have a limited amount of land and a great amount of need – those facilities need to be placed on land in a way that makes it efficient for student use," he said.

"Buildings need to be placed in rational relation to each other."

Sanders said any long-term plan will encounter bumps in the road, such as funding limitations, changes in leadership and new trends in culture and technology.

Pulley agreed, saying the current Master Plan should not be criticized for looking too far into the future. "You can't envision the future with perfect success. ... Things are going to happen that you don't anticipate," she said.

"It's not a sign that earlier plans were defective – it's just reality."

Sanders said constant revision as times change will eliminate errors in judgment that could result in mistakes.

"Buildings have a permanence. You have to live with it for a long time to come. Any building commitment is a longtime commitment."

Board of Trustees Chairwoman Anne Cates said the plan likely will need to be revised often, but because of necessity instead of error. "The world is changing so quickly – as the world changes, it will have to be adapted," she said.

Constant growth in the University itself will likely demand constant attention to the plan. With Moeser at the helm pledging to make UNC the best public university in the nation, the University could take ambitious leaps that will send ripples of change through campus.

"To move ahead, to improve the quality of the University's performance, then we clearly are going to need better facilities. ... I think the facilities that are to be provided for by the (\$3.1 billion) bond and (the Master Plan) are essential to realizing the kind of vision Chancellor Moeser has projected," Sanders said.

Former Student Body Secretary Michael Woods said it is the vision



Students study on Polk Place in front of Wilson Library. Part of the Master Plan's goal is to maintain the ambiance and natural beauty of UNC's campus.

DTH FILE PHOTO

behind the Master Plan that sets it apart from past blueprints. "It's much more of an ideology than a concrete plan," he said.

"Although it's a broad vision, as things come up, the Master Plan will alter itself."

Woods said the Master Plan officials have done an impressive job of covering all bases when it comes to assessing the University's needs.

"I think they've done a very good job making sure they've consulted a lot of professionals about what can be done

here," he said.

"They've been compiling the best minds and the best advice."

But Woods said the plan is lacking a key factor – the voice of students who make UNC what it is today.

"Maybe (student input) is not a crucial part, not necessarily in a critical sense, but important to have."

He expressed concern that in the University's mission to cultivate the intellectual climate on campus, buildings will become more important than recreational space.

Woods suggested that the plan be revised annually by officials – and student representatives – to keep the vision fresh.

Pardue mirrored Woods' opinion, saying the plan is not imperfect but has great potential.

"It may turn out that the Master Plan is too ambitious money-wise, and we won't be able to raise the money," he said.

"It's a goal for us all to shoot for, but it's going to take many years to get through."

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