Tulane

Landscape Plan

DRAFT

November, 1995

Prepared by:
The Office of Campus Planning
Tulane University
BACKGROUND

In 1988, Tulane University retained Christopher Friedrichs, a local landscape architect, to work with the University Senate Committee for Grounds to prepare a landscape master plan for the uptown campus. We have used the 1988 plan as a starting point and as a guide in preparing this updated work. This document restates and/or elaborates all of the basic objectives and goals of the earlier one. This document has been designed to integrate the landscaping guidelines into the overall planning process now in use by the University, and to reconsider and update the design recommendations of the 1988 document to reflect current physical developments on campus and current thinking about landscape strategy.
**Introduction**

Tulane is fortunate to have a site with a near tropical climate which supports an abundant set of rich, native plant materials. The climate allows for an unusual lushness of plant growth and the cultivation of a verdant landscape all year around. It can sustain a landscape of intense color—of various shades of green and of the assorted colors of the many flowering plants which thrive in this area. These qualities of climate can be exploited to create a campus with a unique, identifiable image, a place clearly different from other universities across the country. The landscape is a strong natural resource for the university, and one that is relatively inexpensive to develop.

The landscape image for Tulane should be developed to be naturalistic, instructional and varied. The naturalistic style is informal, potentially asymmetrical, with a sense of looseness and growth rather than tight control or cultivation. Landscape installations work with the natural characteristics of the site instead of imposing unfamiliar elements or qualities on the site. Plant materials are allowed to exhibit their natural growth patterns; they are not pruned or shaped into unnatural geometric shapes. Function is more important than formality of design. Pathways can be irregularly placed and planting patterns respond to the particularities of specific site—sun, orientation, adjacent buildings and trees—rather than to a strictly ordered preconceived planting plan. The emphasis is on creating places, a variety of comfortable outdoor areas for use by members of the campus community.

The naturalistic style is not incompatible with straight lines or regular geometries. It can accept formal installations. In particular, landscape form and order may be stronger in formal public areas of campus and adjacent to buildings with strong geometry and architectonic presence. The naturalistic style will facilitate ease of maintenance, but it will not be maintenance-free, nor should it be allowed to become overgrown or sloppy.

Native plant materials should be emphasized and they should be selected, placed and labelled to allow the campus to function as an outdoor teaching environment. Selection of plant materials should be coordinated with appropriate academic departments to allow the landscape to function as a teaching resource.
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Landscape Functions
The campus landscape accommodates a variety of physical, aesthetic and environmental functions including the following:

1. **Image** - The landscape is the strongest, most pervasive element of the campus image. It should be developed to unify the disparate campus buildings and to create a coherent campus image for Tulane.

2. **Outdoor Space** - The landscape provides spaces for occupation for formal and informal activities, including outdoor study, eating, gathering, and recreational sports. Landscape elements should be manipulated to enclose and define spaces and to create interesting transitions between spaces.

3. **Circulation** - The landscape accommodates and directs the circulation needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles through the network of sidewalks, bike paths, streets and parking.

4. **Service** - The landscape accommodates the service needs of the campus, providing spaces for service access to buildings and locations for trash collection.

5. **Infrastructure** - The landscape accommodates the campus utilities: steam, chilled water, domestic water, telecommunications, electricity, gas, sewerage and storm water drainage.

**Goals**
1. Develop and reinforce the concept of a naturalistic landscape.

2. Create variation within the campus landscape.

3. Develop the campus as a teaching environment or arboretum emphasizing native Louisiana plant materials.

4. Make the function and comfort of the landscape a top priority. Provide shade; create seating areas; include bike parking; develop a variety of spaces and features.

5. Make the landscape visually interesting.

**Principles**
1. Design landscape installations to relate to and complement the adjacent building or buildings. Formal landscaping may be used adjacent to formally designed buildings; in these cases, formally designed areas could be likened to gardens placed within a larger, more naturalistic landscape.

2. Maintain the tree canopy over the front campus and the west side of the Newcomb campus. Replace trees, fill empty spaces as required.

3. Maintain the alleys of oaks along McAlister, Newcomb Place, Newcomb Circle, and the U.C. Quad/Drill Road. Maintenance of these trees is a top landscape priority.

4. Maintain open grass quadrangles, including the front quad, Newcomb quads, and U.C. quad. These quads establish the upper end of the spatial hierarchy which organizes the front and middle campuses.

5. Design landscape to accommodate all methods of circulation through campus, including pedestrians, bicycles, cars and service vehicles. Conflicting modes of circulation should be separated from
one another as much as possible. See Circulation Master Plan.

6. Design campus to promote individual safety at all hours.

7. Provide spaces required for servicing buildings, including parking areas for service vehicles and screened areas for dumpsters. Service activity should be hidden from view from major pedestrian zones.

8. Plant materials should be native/traditional. Plants should require little manipulation of growth habit.

9. Lighting installations should be in compliance with the goals and standards of the Lighting Master Plan.

10. Include sculpture and water elements in landscape designs where appropriate.

**Standards**

1. Design should be suited to the maintenance limitations of the Physical Plant Department Grounds Division. Plantings should be easy to maintain and should generally have long anticipated life spans. At the same time, efforts should be made to increase the resources of the maintenance department so that the quality of the campus landscape is not compromised.

2. Landscape installations should be of high quality. Lighting, irrigation and other similar systems should be installed in a manner which will withstand heavy use, low maintenance, and will discourage vandalism.

3. Material selection should create a sense of consistency across campus while allowing for areas of special interest. The typical paving material for the campus is scored concrete. Concrete should generally be used for all connecting walkways; other paving materials can be used in specific installations to define spaces such as courtyards, entry plazas, etc. Consider using texturing and scoring to reduce the reflectivity of large areas of concrete and to distinguish paths or areas of paving from each other.

4. Designs should minimize the potential for damage from pedestrian patterns, vehicle corner cuts, and vandalism.

5. Use of gravel as a walk surface should be temporary only. Establish a schedule and budget to replace gravel areas beginning in the most heavily trafficked areas. Investigate methods of containing gravel areas while in use to keep gravel bed edges neat.

6. Design landscape installations to prevent water from standing on sidewalk and street surfaces; drain planting beds appropriately. Use new installations as opportunities to address drainage problems in adjacent areas.

7. Use of materials and details should be consistent across campus.
Climate Issues
The landscape should be climate responsive, designed to capitalize on the positive qualities and mitigate the impact of the negative qualities of the New Orleans climate.

1. Use deciduous trees to provide shade for outdoor spaces in the hot summer months and allow for solar warming in the colder months. Deciduous trees adjacent to buildings can effect the building’s energy consumption by reducing the heat gain during the summer and allowing for solar heat gain during the winter.

2. Design outdoor spaces to capitalize on the cooling potential of summer breezes and to protect against winter winds.

3. Use plantings as barriers to pollution by creating planting buffers to block noise, exhaust fumes and other unpleasant odors from impacting outdoor spaces. Plantings also should be used to block unpleasant views.

Materials
Landscape materials include, among others, the following:

1. Plantings
   a. Trees - large and small scale, miscellaneous species.
   b. Shrubs - miscellaneous species, used in the following ways:
      - Hedges used as screens and to define edges of campus or of quads. Hedges often used to screen parked cars.
      - Foundation planting in beds around the edges of buildings. This type of planting is appropriate around buildings with unsightly ground conditions. However, complex, layered foundation planting is not characteristic of the campus.
      - Planting beds, typically of amorphous form with miscellaneous clumps of various plants. Organization, placement, and structure are typically unclear.
   c. Ground covers - miscellaneous species, including grass, jasmine, monkey grass. Some areas suffer from erosion due to heavy campus traffic.

2. Paving
   Most paving across campus is scored concrete, although slate and brick are used occasionally for special paved areas. Streets are asphalt paved.

3. Other Ground Surfaces
   Other ground surface materials in use include crushed gravel and mulch. Gravel is often installed as a temporary paving material.

4. Site Construction Elements
   These elements include planters, walls and fences. Typical materials are brick, concrete block, wood and iron.

5. Site Furniture
   Includes benches, tables, trash receptacles, recycling receptacles, kiosks, bike racks, telephones, etc. Recommend standardization of kiosks, trash receptacles and bike racks (to ribbon racks) across campus and standardization of benches by area or zone.

6. Other
   Curbs, bed edging, parking bumpers, striping, tree grates, man hole covers, drains, etc.

Design Elements
The following are some of the elements of landscape design which can be manipulated to achieve the goals and accommodate the functions outlined above: perspective, line, form, enclosure, texture, aroma, light and shade, air flow, sound and color.
Organizational Elements
The landscape is structured primarily around the following three systems:

1. **Trees**: The planting of major trees is one of the most outstanding landscape features of the Tulane campus. The trees on the front campus and these to the west side of Newcomb Hall are planted in a random fashion and have grown so as to create a dense canopy which defines the quads below and knits together the buildings along the quad edges. In the middle campus, the alleys of oak trees along McAlister, Drill Field Road, Newcomb Place and Newcomb Circle form probably the most dominant landscape feature. Smaller scale trees are also used as accents throughout the landscape.

2. **Quads**: Each section of the campus contains a major open space or lawn. The front quad and Newcomb quads organize the major academic zones and the U.C. quad anchors the center of the student oriented middle campus. The Sugar Bowl quad will be the dominant open space in the southern end of the back campus after the existing open parking lot across from Aron Residences is built out. These quads should remain the dominant hierarchical open spaces for the campus.

3. **Streetscapes**: The streetscapes through campus and between the major campus zones are an integral part of the landscape system. These include Freret Street, Willow Street, McAlister Drive, Drill Field Road, Newcomb Place, Newcomb Circle and Ben Weiner Drive. The appearance of these streetscapes vary, but in general, they suffer from a lack of coordination of the repetitive systems which occur along their flanks. Irregularly placed light standards, uncoordinated and unkempt signage, and broken and discontinuous sidewalks detract from the appearance of the streets. In addition, the location of parking along the street edges is generally too dense and it detracts from the pedestrian experience of the street and, in some locations, poses potentially hazardous safety conditions. The streetscapes should be overhauled to improve their character and the sense of the street fronts as identifiable, occupiable spaces.

**Images**
The dominant image of the typical American campus is that of a park like place, with trees placed somewhat randomly in an open landscape. This image is like that projected by the front campus and the area between Newcomb Hall and Broadway Street, and by the areas to the east of McAlister Drive. However, the middle campus is intersected by a network of perpendicular streets, so in this zone, the urban streetscape is a dominant image. The coexistence of these two dominant images is unusual and requires careful design manipulation to coordinate the systems into a coherent campus. Areas of more dense planting - small unique gardens - might be developed to mediate between the street and park spaces.
Recommendations

1. Design areas at the north and south sides of Newcomb Hall to provide transitional "gateways" from the Broadway quad to Newcomb quad. Include bike parking in this area.

2. Redesign Freret Street edge of campus for consistency of image and utility. Widen sidewalks for pedestrians. Allow for service traffic as necessary. Create high quality image on this very public edge of campus.

3. Improve planting at Gibson Circle to create a stronger public image. Replace signage, sidewalks and repave Gibson Circle with a more formal material than asphalt.

4. Improve sidewalks and sidewalk connections north of Reily.

5. Use landscape elements to design symbolic gateways to the residential quads, especially Warren and Bruff quads.

6. Redesign the streetscape of McAlister Drive. See related proposal.

7. Increase planting along edges of Ben Weiner Drive.

8. Remove some parking adjacent to quads on Newcomb Place and parking on Newcomb Circle. Repave with more formal material.

9. Improve Claiborne Avenue edge of campus.

10. Redesign paving in front of the A & S Building and replant this area.

11. Increase density of planting in back campus.


13. Design all installations with care, even those expected to be temporary. Often, short term economical solutions - such as the installation of crushed gravel in lieu of permanent paving - remain in place for extended periods of time. This can compromise the quality of appearance of the overall campus landscape.

Related Recommendations

See the following documents for related recommendations.

1. Parking Plan. See especially recommendations regarding peripheral parking and reduced use of internal streets for parking.

2. Lighting plan.


4. Circulation plan. See especially recommendations regarding bike paths, bike ports, service cart paths.