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The physical environment of campus is a representation of its community - its beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations.

The completion of the strategic planning process presents an opportunity to restate the values of comprehensive planning and recharge the process of facilities planning and design.

This consideration is also timely, given the interest within the university toward decentralization. An increased sense of departmental independence contrasts with the facilities planning process, which is collective and community based.

Background
Between 1980 and 1990, Tulane experienced a considerable amount of physical development consisting of major buildings, infrastructure changes, and other installations that were not always compatible with the character and quality of the existing campus. There was no organized plan or process to guide growth or manage change. The results were products that were often executed without respect for context or obvious basis. Results usually occurred at the expense of the tout d'ensemble, and were often more expensive than necessary.

In 1991, to improve development, the university initiated a master planning process. An in-house planning and design management process was established, to provide a designated university agent to oversee design and environmental quality.

At the outset, the process sought to address both major and routine projects, to improve design continuity and quality control, while inductively building a master process. More than anything else, it was a strategic and dynamic system specifically tailored for Tulane.

The process has been recognized nationally, and has been used as a model to develop planning programs at other institutions.

Current Planning Activities
The implementation of facilities on Tulane's campus may happen through different sources. A single system of application should be encouraged to promote the highest possible quality of environment and efficiency of process. If it is to be successful, it should be simple, with obvious merits.

Comprehensive Planning
The strategic plan will provide information about projected change. The physical interpretation of the strategic data, coupled with academic, institutional and financial plans constitute a Comprehensive Master Planning Process. The process starts by identifying what the university needs to accomplish. The methodology or actual steps involved in the overall process are then decided by what's most effective. Results can vary from rational conclusions and handsome illustrations that would encourage development, to detailed instructions and programs that can be followed, as a checklist.

Current planning activities should continue to be considerate of permanent solutions.

Whatever the final process, long term goals should be continually reconfirmed, as should the operational systems used to achieve them.

The process should be efficient, consistent and innovative to maximize available resources and effectively build a strong, unified impression of Tulane University.
Components

Facilities Planning shall have two basic components: Documents and Process.

Documents identify goals and issues involved to achieve those goals. The primary objective is to create an organized environment.

Process manages production - for efficiency of execution, quality control, continuity, and effectiveness.

Documents

Uptown Campus Design Strategy
A document to define the actual and ambient qualities of campus. An expression of history, culture, and general characteristics should be taken into account whenever a change to the (physical) environment is considered. This document should be revised as necessary, estimated at five year intervals.

Working Documents
Qualities of campus that can be specifically defined and qualified by university personnel shall be listed and reviewed on a continuing basis, at least annually. This provides an active analysis and opportunity for community review of the working conditions of campus. Collective consideration will help communicate and allow broader understanding of campus issues.

Specific components to date include:
- Landscaping Master Plan
- Parking Master Plan
- General Circulation Plan
- Master Lighting Plan
- Signage Plan
- Recreation Plan
- Conservation Plan
- Accessibility
- Security Design Issues
- Building Condition
- Infrastructure Identification
- Housing
- Project Relationships
- Project Procedures

Process

The main facilities planning responsibilities continue to be the management of the master planning (development) process, and management of the appearance (image) of campus. The intent is to promote consistency of environmental design and campus image, and to help avert expedient and economical facility implementations that are visually detractive or financially more expensive in the long run.

The Steering Committee shall continue to meet on a regular monthly basis to review the process and products of the Planning Office, and particularly campus projects. Members of the campus community shall represent specific points of interest while hearing the points-of-view of others. Improved communication and a fail-safe for significant projects are primary minimum benefits.

The Planning Office shall initiate and facilitate (facility) planning issues; and act as the university agent, or curator, for design and quality control.

The Campus Design Committee, through the Resident Architect, should be promoted as the clearinghouse for everyday improvement.