

**Southern Miss Cross Creek Master Planning Committee
Work Session III Executive Summary
November 12, 2008**

Present: Pat Joachim, Bob Lyman, Joe Morgan, Russ Willis, Dale Ledford, Robert Bass, Larry Lee, Rusty Postlewate, Greg Havens, Jim Eley, Elizabeth Alley, Chet Allred, Hoppy Allred, Nicole Gaenzler, Suzy Hebert, Shelia White, Lynn Estes, Ann Billings, Mary Funk, Christy Elias, Skeeter Dixon, Bill Hawkins, Rob Turner, Steve Jackson, Gaylynn Parker, Tom Lansford, John Hayman, David Taylor, David Sliman, Edward McCormack, Steve Oshrin, David Marchman, Steven Lohrenz, Joe Swaykos, Rachel Carpenter, Larry Crane, William Martin, Bryan Billings, Sid Gonsoulin

November 12, 2008

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Collaborative's Presentation to Committee and General Comments

Greg Havens, lead member of the Collaborative, presented a work-to-date PowerPoint presentation which included a review of the previous campus/town center plan. This was followed by the proposed revised and updated campus/town center plan. Included were suggested community interaction areas such as pedestrian networks, campus trails, primary and secondary entrances, plazas and courtyards. Phasing of the campus was also covered in great detail.

General Comments:

- The Collaborative has been receiving feedback from the development partners regarding town center development
- The Collaborative demonstrated that the development of a centrally located town center plaza brought about restraints which impacted both campus and community development
- Basic General Feedback from last work session
 - Interaction between the University and Town Center is considered to be vital
 - Distance of parking to the campus center should be carefully considered
 - Street connectivity among community, town center, main street, and campus should provide smooth transition for pedestrians, bike riders, cars, and other modes of transportation
 - Some of the options presented did not fully utilize 200 acres
- Taking into consideration feedback from the Planning Team, the Collaborative synthesized three options into one more-preferred model. The following represents collective planning ideas from the entire Planning Team:
 - Compact campus is desirable, walking to the majority of the destinations should be within a 5 minute radius
 - Sharing areas such as food venues, library, recreation center, auditorium, and entertainment should bring about interaction with both the campus and town center
 - Future research sites could be located farther south both inside and outside the University's boundaries
 - Main Street is still being considered as a connection between Interstate 10 and County Farm Road
 - Rather than considering the Wetlands a problem, the Planning Team will focus on the open grass areas as an amenity
 - There will be pedestrian walkways leading to Civic Nodes, which will be gateways that connect the University to the restaurants and other shopping, gathering areas, and future research areas
 - Parking will be strategically phased, where in later phases, surface lots will be replaced by buildings, while expanding to structured parking facilities
 - Two distinct town plaza nodes located at each end of Main Street, approximately 1500 feet apart, create the notion of walking between two anchor stores in a mall
 - A 40 foot right of way is being considered that will provide shade and possibly seating for restaurants in the town gateway
 - The architectural design of the buildings is flexible at this point
 - Courtyard spaces are featured in between the academic buildings to create a gathering space for students, faculty, and staff, therefore connecting academia and student life

- The position of the buildings will give the courtyard areas shading from the sun and also serve to dehumidify the inside of the buildings. Functional windows will also enhance natural ventilation
- The Collaborative indicated academic buildings could house offices on the south side and the classrooms on the north side, the typical academic building is about 80 feet wide
- The plan is to phase the development of the buildings, starting with the first four which ultimately will be the union, library, auditorium, and recreation center. Initially, these four buildings will also function as academic and social gathering spaces
- The campus design will incorporate a “working landscape”, a design that embraces, integrates and embodies the natural characteristics and assets of the property, using the working landscape with the University to engage learning and research

Follow-up Discussion with Committee Break Out Groups

- Concerns about the lake/pond area
 - Design consideration should be given to incorporating smaller lakes/ponds rather than the larger ones indicated in the site plan
 - There is concern for mosquito control as well as the ability to maintain quality water environments within the lake/pond settings
 - Rather than lakes/ponds, the southernmost wetlands may only be used as a bio-swamp
 - Lakes and ponds should be natural looking, not taking on the appearance of being man-made
- The committee expressed concern regarding the accessibility of the streets throughout the campus to support emergency and security vehicles
 - All roads will accommodate emergency vehicles
 - The new campus is in the Harrison County Sheriff’s district. A plan would need to be in place for coordination of campus security
- The committee asked how high the campus was above sea level
 - At the highest point on the land it is 50 feet above sea level
- Concerns were discussed regarding the use of Main Street as a quick through-way to the new high school
 - The widening of Landon Road should serve as an alternate route to travel from east to west and west to east without the need to access Main Street
 - Additionally, by intentionally constructing the Main Street connection to County Farm Road farther south rather than directly into the new school’s intersection should also assist in redirecting traffic
- The committee is in favor of securing a private/public partner such as the YMCA in providing recreation/fitness opportunities—a facility that can serve both the University and community
- With the relocation of the recreation center at the farthest south node of Main Street, concerns were mentioned in regard to the distance between the sports fields and the recreation center relative to locker and shower support to the fields as well as coordinated outdoor activities in close proximity to hard facilities
 - Since there will be a need for concession/restroom facilities to support the field complex, day lockers and showers could also be added as amenities
- Current place making indicates two softball, two baseball, and several soccer/flag football sized fields. It was noted that collegiate recreation programs usually only have softball fields, and to be effective in supporting events, a minimum of four softball fields should be designed into the project. The preference is to create four adult softball fields in a wheeled format with concessions/restrooms in the center
- Open grassy areas should be provided to support informal recreation/sporting activities

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Discussion of Planning Principles

- Planning Principles developed by the Planning Principles Work Team were discussed in small group sessions with facilitators reporting comments and suggestions at the end of the session.
- Overall, the Planning Team was pleased with the Planning Principles presented, making only a few suggestions for enhancements.
- Suggested improvements included language to emphasize integrated student life and academic spaces, informal gathering and discussion spaces, creating a sense of belonging, an emphasis on shaded areas for sitting as well as walking, and emphasis on designing transparent spaces to afford views of outdoor spaces.

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Additional discussion of campus building/landscape design considerations

- Balconies overlooking the pedestrian walkways were suggested
- The planning committee envisioned sidewalks with possible seating for students/community to socialize, eat, and relax
- Alternate routing away from Main Street should be considered to support access for emergency/security vehicles/personnel as well as support for social events such as festivals, parades, art exhibits, etc.
- The Planning Team would like open plazas to take on characteristics of stand alone places but open enough to serve numerous occupants. These spaces should be welcoming and casual.
- The committee is in favor of designing parking gardens rather than parking lots, where there will be greenery intermixed with the parking spaces
- The committee is in agreement that the natural look of the water instead of the man-made look is better
- The committee feels that courtyard areas should be as maintenance free as possible
- The collaborative is carefully weighing aesthetics vs. economic considerations to create a balance that is both practical and pleasing to the senses
- The Planning Team believes that shade is going to be a key factor when designing general gathering areas
- Although green roofs are desirable for some projects, this sustainable application is still considered to be experimental. Many other sustainable applications will be considered for the development site when attempting to attain Silver LEED certification
- USM would like to consider options for wireless internet access both indoors and outdoors
- The Collaborative will present more specifics on the preferred site plan during the next work session

In general, the overall Planning Committee indicated confirmation regarding the direction in which the project is heading

Wrap-up meeting and next steps (Feedback)

- The January Cross Creek Work Session scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2009, will be a half day session
- A Web-Ex hosted by Sasaki with the development partners and Leadership Team should be scheduled before the end of the year to discuss the updated workings of the Planning Team with the intent to garner support and to begin finalizing the campus/town center footprint and work toward developing a memorandum of agreement from which all parties can move forward.