Appendix C: Campus Planning at the University of Washington
The University of Washington, founded in 1861, is one of the oldest state institutions of higher education on the Pacific Coast. Planning of the campus has been an almost continuous process since its move from downtown Seattle to its present location in 1891.

In planning for the future it is important to look at the past. This section briefly reviews the history of planning on the University of Washington Seattle Campus.

The word “campus” is Latin, meaning “a field” and describes the green expansiveness which distinguishes many American university campuses including our university. The decision to move the University from downtown Seattle to its present site likely was influenced by a desire to not only have room to grow, but to achieve a true “campus.” Paul Venable Turner in “Campus- An American Planning Tradition” writes:

“Another trait that typifies American college planning is its spaciousness and openness to the world.” “But beyond these purely physical meanings, the word has taken on other connotations, suggesting the pervasive spirit of a school, or its genius loci, as embodied in its architecture and grounds. Campus sums up the distinctive physical qualities of the American college, but also its integrity as a self-contained community and its architectural expression of educational and social ideals.”

The first plans for the present campus, the Oval Plan of 1898, also known as the Fuller Plan, and the Olmsted Plan of 1904, sited the first buildings including Denny, Parrington, Lewis and Clark Halls, and established a respect for the value of the landscape, open space and vistas.
Through the two plans, the campus evolved from an initial informal organization of buildings to a more formal oval. Under the direction of the Olmsteds the oval evolved into a more formally organized but separated “Arts and Sciences Quadrangles.” These initial plans might have grown from precedence established on some uniquely American campuses in non-urban settings during the mid nineteenth century. This established the University and its buildings truly in a “field,” the Latin definition of “campus.” Oddly though, this second plan did not take advantage of the vistas that drove the siting of the first building, Denny Hall.

Another plan developed in 1906 in conjunction with the Alaska-Yukon Exposition of 1909 was inspired by the the Beaux-Arts system of architectural planning. As Paul Venable Turner notes in “Campus An American Planning Tradition,” “…the Beaux-Arts movement was well suited to express the character of the new educational institution. Its principles of monumental organization facilitated orderly planning on a grand scale and were capable of including many disparate buildings or parts within a unified overall pattern.” The strongest legacy resulting from the Exposition was the establishment of the Rainier Vista and a number of additional radials that oriented the campus outwards to Lake Washington, the Cascades, and Mt. Rainier.

The next question, as Norman J. Johnston puts it in The Fountain and the Mountain, the University of Washington Campus 1895-1995 “...was how to meld the grandeur of the former exposition grounds with the uncertain planning of upper campus.” The Olmsted firm was hired to prepare a plan which subsequently was rejected by the Board of Regents. The Regents Plan, another campus plan, was prepared by Carl Gould in 1915 and refined and developed further by Bebb and Gould in 1920. These plans established the additional axis through what became the liberal arts quadrangle and the pivotal hinge space, now Central Plaza, which became the site of Suzzallo Library, the original Meany Hall auditorium, and the central point of the three main campus axes (Rainier Vista, the Liberal Arts Quad, and Campus Parkway). With this plan, the fundamental skeleton of the structure of the campus was established.
Bebb and Gould and the successor firm Jones and Bindon continued to update and prepare new plans for the campus as well as design buildings through the 1940s. An update of the 1915 and 1920 Plan published in 1935 reaffirmed the basic design principles of earlier plans: “These (Liberal Arts, Science, and Central) quads are the center of academic life and the institution and the key to the entire campus plan.” As Norman Johnston summarized: “It also called for some adjustments that eventually informed major campus development decisions (but not until after World War II): the location of a comprehensive student union building due east of Suzzallo Library, the assignment of the campus golf course south of Northeast Pacific Street to a health sciences complex and the development of the northeasterly campus ridge above and paralleling Montlake Boulevard for student housing.” During this period a new University boulevard was proposed as the westerly approach to the campus from the University Bridge.

Medicine joined the University in 1946 at the same time the campus was facing a major post-War expansion. The 1948 Plan reaffirmed ideas for expansion such as the location of dormitories on the northeast slope of central campus, the development of health sciences, expansion of construction surrounding the old Meany Hall, the increasing of density around the science quad, development of the Campus Parkway, and the continuation of the historic structure. The plan also recommended acquisition of the land east of the railroad right-of-way (now the Burke Gilman trail) to Union Place and north of Northeast Forty-fifth Street. While the University acquired a portion for a service building, the rest was acquired by others for what became the University Village shopping center.

The early 1960s also saw the expansion of the campus into those areas west of 15th Avenue NE and south of Campus Parkway. Plans were developed for the greater campus by architects Paul Thiry (1962) and Walker & McGough (1963) and in the 1970s and 80s by the Campus Planning Office established in 1969. These plans directed the introduction of substantially larger
developments including the plaza garage, red square and the surrounding buildings, additions to Suzzallo Library, new science, engineering, medical and health, other professional schools, recreation and sports and residential buildings.

Much of this development and the focus of the plans has been concentrated around the perimeter of the central campus on the eastern slope, in the south campus and in the west campus. Therefore, much greater attention and concern has focused on the interface between the campus and the surrounding communities, on environmental concerns associated with development on slopes, near shorelines and in other environmentally sensitive areas, and with transportation impacts due to growth on campus, in surrounding areas and along the Interstate 520 corridor.

Since 1962, University planning has taken place in the context of the urban neighborhoods surrounding the campus. With the adoption of the 1975 State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the University (with lead agency jurisdiction) instituted a more formal process for evaluating community impacts for all plans and projects. As the entire Seattle community grew, the University, the neighborhoods and the City recognized the need for more planning coordination and adopted, in 1977, the “Joint Statement of Goals and Policies of the City of Seattle and the University of Washington.” It contains specific policies related to the development of the campus and the surrounding area including policies related to campus size, land use and acquisition, site development and design, transportation, housing, and interface with the community. In addition, it established a community advisory process.

In 1983, a City-University Agreement was established which committed the University to prepare a new comprehensive master plan for future campus development for review and approval by the City. This was the first master plan required of a major institution in Seattle. The University’s General Physical Development Plan for 1991-2001 established policies and plans for land use, design, open space and landscape, site development, waterfront, transportation goals and management as well as a ten-year development program. It was a plan approved by both the Regents and the City Council.
Supplementary to the GPDP was the development and approval of a separate Southwest Campus Plan in 1994. Plans for the North and East campus sectors have been subsequently prepared as advisory plans (not formally adopted by the city). Their recommendations are updated and integrated into this Master Plan.

The 1998 City-University agreement governs the current master planning process. This agreement requires that the University formulate a 10-year conceptual Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) including items such as development standards, a transportation plan, a description of future energy needs and improvements, proposals for physical development and proposed street or alley vacations. The Master Plan and EIS will then move through a series of city and community reviews before final completion.

Since the development of the Regents plan in 1915, the plans prepared and the processes and policies pursued have all respected the fundamental concepts and structure which originally established the campus environment. In most instances plans have proposed means of both conserving and reinforcing the historic and valued components of that environment.

Changing technologies, new programs, the nature of research, and architectural style has affected proposals for new development. Some development, especially that built during the 1960s, caused conflicts with the historic structure, but often, as in the 1980s and 90s, new construction extended the campus structure in a compatible way, retaining the essential qualities valued in the campus environment.

The Master Plan described in this document, like previous ones, addresses the need to conserve and enhance our valued, historic environment with the contemporary need for new development while anticipating future needs and opportunities. This latter responsibility argues for building policies which recognize flexibility. While the mission of the University will likely remain the same, the means and activities for achieving that mission will change in unanticipated ways. The new Master Plan should embody and embrace continuity and permanence, symbolic of institutions in our culture, as well as maintain an openness to change and experimentation, reflective of the creative search for new knowledge fundamental to the role of a University.
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