

Riverpoint Higher Education Campus

Master Plan – 2000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Vision

The beginning of the 21st century is being accompanied by pervasive change. A global economy affects the health and wealth of nations; the information superhighway links the world into a single community through instantaneous communication; people generally live longer, more productive lives; and migration patterns have brought people into close proximity with one another so that they are now literally neighbors. For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lives in cities. It is within this rapidly changing world that the mission of universities must be advanced. Because the future lies in cities, universities must increasingly connect their students to urban areas. Students need to be fully equipped as professionals for this newly emerging pluralistic, urban world.

The relationship between cities and institutions of higher learning is one that dates back hundreds of years. The University of Bologna in Italy, the Sorbonne in Paris, and Oxford and Cambridge in England are some of the earliest examples of academia becoming significant elements of the fabric of their respective communities. This tradition has carried over to the United States, where we have Harvard and MIT in Cambridge, and Columbia and NYU in New York City. In these instances-and many more- these colleges and universities have contributed to the overall life and vitality of their urban surroundings. In return, these cities have provided "living laboratories" for the students to experience and test, as well as being where many of them accepted their first jobs following graduation.

In Spokane, this tradition is being followed with the establishment of the Riverpoint Campus. Because of its location, the Riverpoint Campus has the opportunity to become a truly urban university in Spokane.

B. Master Plan Concept

The Riverpoint Campus is envisioned as an urban university, with buildings addressing streets and major pedestrian corridors, and parking accommodated in structures around the periphery of the academic core. Open spaces are to be pedestrian scale, interconnected via pedestrian ways, and developed to a high standard. Buildings are to be constructed with high quality, long life materials (e.g., stone, brick, and concrete). It is anticipated that buildings will vary in height to a maximum of six stories, with an average height approaching four stories.

Students, faculty and staff will be encouraged to use alternative transportation whenever practical to reduce single occupancy auto use. Even with this encouragement, it is anticipated that ultimately 2500 parking spaces may be needed to accommodate students, staff and faculty. Since State Route 290 will not be rerouted from Trent Avenue in the near term, it is imperative that traffic-calming measures be instituted to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety. A variety of options should be pursued including street narrowing, traffic islands and boulevards, lane width

reductions, street parking, sidewalk extensions at intersections, traffic signals, signage, lighting changes, street landscaping, and surface changes in pedestrian street crossings.

That portion of the Spokane River which abuts campus is to be restored to a semi-natural riparian condition, favorable to fish and wildlife. Paved and accessible recreation trails are to be maintained along the river to encourage use by walkers, joggers, bicyclists and persons with mobility difficulties.

The key elements of the concept include:

- The central pedestrian mall around which the buildings are organized.
- The Y-shaped pedestrian links which lead to the Spokane River.
- The diagonal view corridor that extends southeast to Main and Riverside Avenues.
- Preservation of a transportation corridor adjacent to the BNSF mainline (to accommodate a light rail line and a possible relocated State Route 290).
- Revegetation of the riparian corridor along the Spokane River.
- Below grade and above grade structured parking.
- Campus gateways to help visitors become oriented.

C. Site Development

The rate or sequence of development of the campus cannot be determined with any degree of certainty at this time. As a consequence, a very flexible master plan has been prepared that will accommodate growth at whatever rate it occurs, in a variety of different sequences, and can accommodate future alterations to the existing transportation system.

The next stage of development assumes that three academic buildings will be constructed in the area between Academic I and Health Sciences. A total of approximately 2650 full time equivalent (FTE) students can be accommodated when all three buildings are in place. To keep development costs as low as practical, surface parking will be used to accommodate all vehicles. During this stage of development surface parking is a “place holder” that will be replaced with buildings in future stages of development. Anticipating biennial funding of buildings it is conceivable that this stage could be completed in 2008 or 2009.

Stage II of development assumes the construction of several additional academic buildings, plus structured parking in a garage located near the southern edge of campus and under new buildings along Trent.

When this stage of development is completed a total of approximately 3700 FTE students can be accommodated on campus. This configuration reflects the current academic vision for the campus to the extent predictable within the limitations of current demographic data and trends for the future. Stage II illustrates only one of several ways academic buildings could be arranged on the 48-acre site.

As the rate of campus expansion is dependent on a number of variables, including growth of the metropolitan area, increase in the number of students seeking higher education services statewide and in the Spokane area, availability and cost of alternative higher education opportunities, and availability of funding for new construction, it is difficult to estimate when this stage of development might be completed.

The Riverpoint Campus is an integral part of the Spokane downtown and, from a planning perspective, ultimately the best use of the land would require an urban density of development consistent with the urban environment on the east end of Spokane's downtown. The Riverpoint Campus master planning process also looked at how the campus might develop beyond the current academic and economic planning horizons. With the input of the community, and with an understanding of the potential that exists for development of the area, the Riverpoint Campus master planning process looked at the "carrying capacity" of the site. Assuming an urban level of development, and a shift over time toward alternatives to the use of single-occupant private vehicles, a site carrying capacity diagram was developed. Based upon this approach, if the 48-acre site was fully built-out, it could accommodate in excess of 1.5 million gross square feet. The number of FTE students that could be served by this development is extremely variable but might range from 6,000 to 7,000 students. The actual number would also depend upon the number of traditional academic programs and research components provided, the mix of programs from each institution, as well as the hours of operation within the campus. Stage III illustrates the possible appearance of the campus at full build-out, assuming maximum carrying capacity within the anticipated density of the east Spokane CBD.

In a master planning process it is important to develop a framework that allows great future flexibility. This can be accomplished by carefully diagramming and evaluating a variety of potential future configurations and then finding a common organizational framework that does not preclude potentially desirable and identifiable future outcomes from being accomplished. Developing a master plan diagram that looks at maximum carrying capacity helps to identify just such a framework. While the campus may never actually reach this level of development, by anticipating growth beyond the foreseeable future, inadvertent constraints on future options may be avoided.