A successful university has a vital and vibrant student life component. With a high proportion of commuters, University of New Orleans is challenged to provide a critical mass of facilities and activities that create a sense of community for both residents and commuters.

For residents, establishing additional housing neighborhoods within the campus periphery, housing about twice the size in density of Pontchartrain Halls, will help create manageable scale environments for first-year students that will contribute to student success and will provide venues for many student activities. The recommended zones for residential development, see figure, fulfill the principles of protecting and reinforcing open space, emphasize campus gateway experiences, and are adjacent to Elysian Fields Ave., a key corridor for development recommended in the City of New Orleans Master Plan. There is sufficient space in these zones to accommodate additional students, first floor commercial, and structured parking. The neighborhoods, comprised as groupings of multi-use commercial first floor and residential buildings, will also include dining facilities to serve residents as well as other support facilities including commons or activity rooms, computer labs, student offices and small exercise rooms. In addition, each neighborhood will include outdoor recreation space such as informal play fields and courts for basketball and volleyball. In addition to these zones, the replacement of Bienville Hall with a modern residential facility will help serve the University's needs, reinforce a campus gateway, and provide students in Engineering and the Sciences a nearby option for campus living.

Although the campus is near its limit in developable open space, the area highlighted in blue, see figure, would be an ideal space for low-scale residential development. The area, bordering the central campus loop, is currently unsightly and lacks any pedestrian scale. It also happens to be adjacent to the principle academic core and the Cove, creating a premium location for students living on campus and for the University to begin to reinforce a vibrant campus life.

The University should also pursue investing in the residential neighborhoods located beyond the campus periphery area. The St. Anthony neighborhood located to the South of campus is within a 10 minute walk to the Library and easy walking distance of all campus destinations. Multiple properties in this area currently belong to the City of New Orleans Redevelopment Authority and the park located at the intersection of Robert E. Lee and St. Anthony would benefit from a University-City partnership.

All of the zones, replacement, high-density residential, low-scale residential, and nearby neighborhood residential could be built-out using funding from public-private partnerships. As a secure land owner, the University has a long term commitment to success and multiple development opportunities are available with little immediate cost to the University.
The Campus Master Plan recommends that the University pursue three types of student housing by 2020 so that it may be its expected enrollment of 15,000 full time equivalent students and house 3,750 of those student on campus—an addition of approximately 2,000 beds.

**Live + Learn Communities**
A new live + learn student community neighborhood will meet multiple student needs currently unavailable on campus. A live + learn community provides students with the computer labs, group study spaces, interactive classrooms, quiet study lounges, artists’ lofts, and equipment and space for indoor and outdoor exercise, and restaurants and shops to support everyday life all within the familiar context of where they live. Such communities encourage interactions amongst students and are often organized by colleges to help them build real connections based upon a familiar interest. As proposed, the four structures frame a new entrance off of Elysian Fields Boulevard and Alumni Drive, reinforcing a central goal of the master plan to create a formal campus gateway. As students and parents arrive to campus, Alumni Drive will be lined by 120,000 square feet of street level retails reserved for restaurants, shops, classrooms, and student support offices on the first floor of each multi-use building. Restaurants and shops will have ample space to setup café tables and other essentials street side. Behind the buildings, large courtyards spaces will serve as an important transition and meet-up place between classes or other activities. The top three floors will serve primarily residential needs as well as quiet study spaces, labs, and multi-use activity areas that can serve as classrooms or a place to watch the game. The residential floors could support 240 street side apartments with balconies, 15,000 square feet of artists’ lofts, and 20 townhomes. Along with street side parallel parking, a new 1,000 car, four level structured deck will provide ample parking stalls for residents and other people from the New Orleans. The proposed live + learn community could support approximately 830 individuals as a place of residence but will also serve the whole campus as a university main street.

**Modern Residence Hall**
At the time of this report, Bienville Hall, built in 1969 as the University’s first residence hall, was nearing authorization for a $10m demolition and site rehabilitation agreement with FEMA due to unforeseen structural damages caused by sustained Category 4 winds from Hurricane Katrina. Incentives are available for reusing the site with a similar use. Since 2005, FEMA has adjusted its policies to permit sites to be used for similar purposes without having to be replicas of the earlier structure. The proposed footprint, as shown, is approximately 33,000 square feet and, depending upon the number of floors, could easily accommodate the remaining 1,200 students. Following the recommendation of the master planning committee, a model similar to “the HUB” created by CORE campus would be the preferred use of this site.

**Affinity Housing**
A third and also very familiar campus residence life building, yet unsupported type on the University campus, is Affinity housing. Affinity housing is similar to Greek housing and can also be used to support Greek housing, but is an opportunity for any coop or organization to establish a permanent home on the University campus. The plan calls for approximately 7 structures, housing 100 students on the second and third floors, with the first floor devoted to community space. The units are laid out to form an edge to the liberal arts quad and act as main street bordering the Cove. The location is also intricately woven into the university campus with ready access to academic buildings.
The University of New Orleans Main Campus was originally oriented around a North-South and East-West axis centered on the library. Pedestrian routes were rigidly laid out to follow this grid pattern. Improvements to campus open spaces and walkways have since been restricted to the immediate site of building construction, creating an awkward pattern of self-referential design. As a consequence, there is a general lack of connectivity across campus, save the original axial layout of the major walkways. The University has adequate land to accommodate the uses associated with a campus of a 15,000 FTE enrollment. The current state of the campus, spread out over 195 acres and a mile away another 150 acres, struggles to reinforce an active campus community which once sustained 17,000 students.

Nationally, academic programs are encouraged to facilitate interdisciplinary interactions across colleges. The University is fortunate in that all of the facilities in the academic core are within a 5-minute walk of the library. In order to create a critical mass of activity and pedestrians to enliven and create a strong sense of community, the University should look improving pedestrian connections to the core of campus and providing more opportunities that enhance the academic learning environment within this core.

Several walkways should be enhanced. One is the East-West connection that connects the University Center with the Library. This highly active walkway can be the campus “main street” linking important academic destinations. Perpendicular to this, a prominent alle of Live Oaks connects the Library to Lake Pontchartrain. Although the view is blocked by the levee, nonexistent at the time the axial relationship was established, and marred by an expansive, treeless surface parking lot, it presents the most potential to create a dynamic entrance experience to campus from the new lake, but also a landscape experience reminiscent of the regions cultural legacy.

These major routes will be supplemented with secondary pedestrian routes. Raised walkways criss-crossing campus open spaces are highly desired due to routine campus flooding. These walkways should be planned carefully, preserving a great lawn for student activities, and of sufficient width to successfully support anticipated level of activity. Clear linkages to parking locations will also be added to aid visitors and the community finding destinations.

1. Create a front door to the Library Building and the new PEC: remove barrier, install new benches, phone charging stations, steps and ADA walk or ramp, create plaza in center, and identify edge where existing patio will be treated as an 18” seat wall condition. This is a highly visible, social zone of activity designed to encourage social interactions amongst the University community.

2. Create a visible, usable student learning and performance environment: remove majority of screening plants around pond, clean pond, remove most or all of berm between pond and pavilion and relocate soil to a more peripheral slope, install naturalistic benches, tables and benches, outdoor wi-fi, power and more lights. This is a highly visible, student learning environment with ample locations to sit and study or listen to performances.

3. Activate the front door to the University Center as the Student Resource Center of UNO: remove horseshoe parking area and berm, create a memorable entry experience or student square, improve pedestrian access across Milneburg Road, activate outdoor space with seating and shade opportunities and commercial activity, like snow balls, hot dog vendors, or food trucks.
Current campus circulation divides the periphery from the core via a U-shaped primary vehicle route (in black). Primary pedestrian paths, shown in blue, cross the vehicle routes in two central places, causing a daily conflict between those students who stay on campus, primarily resident, and those students leaving campus, primarily commuters. As the campus grows to better facilitate a residential campus, these areas of constraint, see below, will only serve to frustrate both groups of students, creating a safety risk as well as an inconvenience to schedules.

The locations of major conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles occur where people cross from the academic core to the Cove and the University Center on the periphery. A series of minor conflicts exist along Founder’s Road where major campus pedestrian routes facilitate access to expansive parking areas. Because the primary areas of pedestrian conflicts lie across two central vehicular corridors, a recurring theme of earlier master plans has been to create a loop road around most campus buildings.
The most frequent loop road concept, representing the addition of campus buildings not present in 1969 is above. The strengths of the internal loop road concept are that it avoids major and most minor constraints and provides easy means to navigate the campus in a vehicle via an internal loop road system primarily built upon existing paved surfaces. The weakness is that it breaks up the intramural fields, increases vehicle use in the academic core, between the Engineering Building and the Sciences, and fragments the large area on the Northeast part of campus that is identified as an opportunity zone for residential development. The design has been proposed for decades, has never been implemented, and does not optimally support the campus priorities to create a pedestrian friendly campus.
An alternative to the internal loop road system is a similar pattern but with a reliance on the external roads available and maintained by the City of New Orleans. Lakeshore, Elysian Fields, and Leon C. Simon are all boulevards lightly used during UNO’s peak times of congestion. The benefits of the external loop are that the campus is not further fragmented to support vehicular use and that pedestrian use is foremost facilitated. The constraints are that it will necessitate an excellent signage and wayfinding system to help visitors arrive to find their destination.
A third alternative is to use the existing vehicular system but to enhance it into a series of boulevards, as shown in the original campus master plan. This concept reflects the patchwork potential of campus development, to commit to small projects at a time, does not add any additional vehicular routes to campus, and uses a well-known New Orleans design element to improve pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. The benefits of a boulevard system is that it provides a safe-place in the middle of the street for students to cross one lane while it is empty and another lane when it clears up (see section 84-85)—reducing overall congestion. The boulevards also slow traffic down and create a strong campus identity throughout the campus. The concept is frequently used in cities to deal with the very type of fluid congestion that the University encounters. The constraints are that it eliminates some of the highly visible parking spots immediately adjacent to the route—note, each of the circulation concepts eliminates an equal amount or more parking spots.
The Master Plan Committee was presented with the various options available and agreed on a conceptual circulation plan that eliminated the use of Founder’s Road, restricted access near the University Center on Milneburg, and implemented safer pedestrian crossings throughout campus. The use of current complete streets practices to slow vehicular traffic will improve the form and function of the campus. Additionally, further meetings with campus facilities and police addressed the need to eliminate bus access to the campus core and add an exit to the City side of the levee on Lakeshore Drive, closer to the traffic circle on Elysian Fields. Additionally, campus police noted that vehicular traffic is frequently over the speed limit on campus and would benefit from street design directed at lowering speeds without adding barriers like speed bumps. Campus police also identified that the new entrance on Lakeshore Drive has several safety issues with blind spots and pedestrian conflicts. The newly installed ornamental wall, see below, is in the line of sight for existing vehicles, forcing them to pull into the street to look for on-coming traffic.
The proposed final campus circulation plan takes the recommendations of the master planning committee and includes a partial campus loop road using the existing internal network and city streets along with a new network of boulevard streets. Neutral grounds (or medians) planted with ornamental trees like Crape myrtle throughout the loop system will reinforce a consistent campus identity not currently available. Larger street trees bordering the drives will reinforce the campus streets and walkways, providing shade, seasonal color, and enhance campus aesthetics. Boulevards create a safe haven for pedestrians to cross one lane of traffic while it is not busy and wait for the other lane to clear before crossing, easing issues related to congestion and safety. The use of neutral grounds also limits the location and direction that traffic can turn, promoting a more predictable traffic pattern for pedestrians and bicyclists. One further addition to the vehicular circulation pattern is the inclusion of a traffic circle at St. Anthony and Milneburg. The traffic circle is useful for slowing traffic and reducing the prominence of the Milneburg gateway so first time visitors will be more inclined to find the visitor parking lot behind the library.

As shown, Founders Road has been relocated behind the larger parking area on the West side of campus. The new route promotes safer vehicle access to parked cars and reduces frequent congestion. The existing Founder’s Road has been modified to serve as a cart-way for parking areas and service access wherever possible. The rerouting of Founder’s Road also enhances the Coves connection to the campus, better integrating the facility into the campus core.

Also, as shown, the existing pedestrian paths across campus that will be maintained are shown in beige while new walkways are illustrated either white or red. The red patterned areas are new or recent campus plazas, like the Cove, that create outdoor environments for students. The proposed circulation plan includes the building of two new parking decks capable of holding approximately 1,000 cars each and built to 4-5 levels.

The campus master plan recommendations all call for a promenade, connecting the University Center and Plaza on one end with the Library Building and Terrace on the other. The wide paths of the promenade are lined with ample seat walls and low maintenance native planting to create an active social space that changes seasonally.

The removal of the berm at the pavilion and the elimination of tall plants between the existing pond and the promenade, will create an open and accessible environment filled with sights and sounds inspired by the unique New Orleans environments.

Campus life by creating a natural space for people to run into each other or catch a performance at the Student Park Pavilion.

Recommended Pedestrian Promenade and Circulation Plan

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Campus Circulation Plan
Student Park and Privateer Promenade
Improve Campus Entry and Image

The University of New Orleans does not have a memorable or clear entry that serves to orient visitors to the campus and make finding destinations easy. The campus is served by five essentially equal entries, all of which lead to a U-shaped loop road that separates the academic core from the periphery. Each of these entry points has a monument sign in a vegetative setting.

Wayfinding

Each of the five entry areas should be made to work more clearly. Visitors should be directed to park close to their destination and walk, not drive around until they find their destination, then the closest visitor parking lot. Vehicle wayfinding signs, while uniform and easily identified, are poorly placed, far removed from entry points, and lack meaningful content for visitors, such as a means to find visitor parking or information. Numbering signs and including parking symbols would make it easier for visitors to follow directions and find parking. Additionally, once visitors leave the University, appropriate signage should help them find which way to the French Quarter, I-10, I-610, and the airport. Signage along the prominent routes to the University, Leon C. Simon, Elysian Fields, and Lakeshore Drive, would provide additional help and create a stronger University identity.
Traditionally, universities have a distinct gateway experience that invokes a sense of pride, identity, or sense of place for students, employees, visitors, and alumni. Vertical elements, such as columns, tall gateways, or clock towers were frequently used to serve as such landmarks. Since the University of New Orleans already has the smoke-stack at the Alumni Building as a key vertical element, a frequent subject of discussion is a better gateway experience. Regardless of a formal entry, every entrance to the University should provide an easily navigable experience. The following concepts identify some directions the campus can take for a formal entry and all assume that the current vehicular routes remain unchanged.

Concept A. Resolving the two original main entrances off of St. Anthony and Leon C. Simon and Alumni Drive off of Elysian Fields. Both entrances lead to the core of campus, on axis with the Library. Both entrances also intersect with a proposed campus loop road that separates the campus core from its periphery. The St. Anthony entry coincides with one of the better resolved open spaces at the University and easy access for new students and visitors to access the library. It is also the only entry to campus with a direct connection to the City of New Orleans. Alumni Drive off of Elysian Fields could present more of the dramatic point of entry to campus and make a clear connection to a key urban route in New Orleans.