

**TOPIC: AURARIA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER MASTER PLAN
UPDATE 2007**

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I. SUMMARY

The Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC) has submitted an update to its facility master plan, which was last approved by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education in 2001. The updated plan submits an urban vision for the development of buildings and open spaces and creates neighborhoods for the Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State College of Denver (MSCD) and the University of Colorado, Denver (UCD). Through an extensive planning process beginning in 2006, the planning committee and consultants established the following five guiding principles for future development of the campus:

- Expanding and intensifying the campus to meet the current and future space needs;
- Enhancing the identity of the individual institutions without undermining the shared identity of the Auraria Campus;
- Supporting the educational objectives of the three institutions by creating new opportunities for learning in buildings or outdoors;
- Creating strong physical and programmatic connections from the campus to Denver's core transit systems, regional parks and parkways;
- Developing a plan that represents sustainable planning and design.

The AHEC campus currently occupies 126 acres near Denver's financial district, the theater and convention district, and many mixed-use neighborhoods. Within the submitted master plan, the campus plans on utilizing 15 acres for an urban district utilizing public/private development.

The plan lays out a vision for intensifying development on AHEC's 126 acres over the next twenty years, given current space deficits and growth forecasts. Campus growth projections estimate AHEC will need to accommodate an additional headcount of 6,000 students, faculty, and staff in the next twenty years. Given this, the campus will need to construct nearly 1.2 million square feet of assignable square feet (ASF).

Today, the campus has approximately 2.3 million gross square feet (GSF) of buildings for academic, administrative, service and support uses, and it is predicted to need an additional 1.8 million GSF of buildings for the same purposes to accommodate expected growth in student, faculty, and staff populations over the next twenty years and to cover existing space shortfalls. In addition to the identified campus expansion need, an estimated 419,000 GSF of existing buildings need a significant investment in renovation.

The plan's space needs analysis found the largest current needs to be for classroom and special use facilities, with current space deficits of 158,234 and 233,866 assignable square feet respectively.

The process for this master plan update began when the planning team (Studio Insite, Sasaki Associates and U3 Ventures) was hired in 2006. Visioning sessions were held with all of the institutions on the campus to determine needs, examine physical conditions, parking, light rail impact and pedestrian/vehicular access. The master planning team worked with the Master Plan and Facilities subcommittee of the Auraria Board, with the resulting plan being completed in 2007. The consultant team's experience at other campuses was combined with consideration of three sets of well-established guidelines to inform the program analysis: the Council of Educational Facility Planners International; Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Capital Facilities Planning and Programming Criteria; and the Association of College Research and Libraries.

National space guidelines used in the preparation of the plan suggests that AHEC currently has only 65 percent of the occupied space it needs to serve its existing population. Of this shortage, classroom facilities show the greatest deficit of academic categories. The campus currently has two approved program plans that will contribute to eliminating some of the classroom space needs, including the Science Building and the South Classroom. The Science Building, which has already received \$35 million in state capital construction funds, will include the renovation of an existing 146,221 GSF as well as the construction of 197,596 GSF of new space.

AHEC also has developed a program plan for renovation and expansion of the South Classroom building on campus, which will increase the classroom inventory; however, this project currently has no funding. While this additional classroom space will help to alleviate some of the campus' space deficit, significant classroom space needs will continue to exist. Given this, AHEC plans to develop program plans for additional campus academic building in the near term.

Due to AHEC's opportunity for shared facilities and mixed-use buildings, its large commuting student population, and access to facilities in the surrounding neighborhoods, the space analysis used for this plan reduced need for assembly, exhibition, dining/food facilities, open lounges, merchandising, recreation, meeting rooms, and related service areas by 50 percent below national guidelines. Even after reducing these expectations, AHEC general uses space needs are estimated to grow by over 200,000 ASF in the next two decades.

Another growth priority for AHEC as identified through the master planning process is the campus library. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)

guidelines suggest that the library has a shortfall of stack and service space for its existing and planned collection. Assuming a growth in the library collection due to increased enrollment, it is estimated that an additional 100,000 ASF of study and stack space will be needed in the next twenty years. In addition, a 2004 external study of the facility established that its electrical and networking capabilities are inadequate for the existing building and do not allow for expansion. Further, the study group recommended the need to redesign and equip library space for collaborative learning, including the provision of additional breakout rooms, expanded space for computer commons and increased study stations.

The AHEC Executive Board will examine the form, function and extent to which AHEC institutions and other sources currently support AHEC administration. This understanding will then be applied to implement the 2007 AHEC Master Plan Update. The Executive Board will develop a plan to perpetuate, expand, and/or enhance the current financing system to support AHEC functions during plan implementation.

II. BACKGROUND

The AHEC campus, originally planned for 13,000 full time (equivalent) students, opened in 1976. The original design of the campus honored the historic street grid system of the Town of Auraria and the preservation of architecturally and culturally significant buildings (including the Tivoli Brewery building, St. Elizabeth's Church, St. Cajetan's Church, the Emmanuel Gallery and the historic homes along what is now 9th Street Park). With a large amount of acreage on the new campus, the first generation of academic buildings were developed at three stories or less and concentrated on the eastern half of the campus. Portions of the west edge of the campus are in the 100-year floodplain of the Platte River, and the majority of campus land west of 9th Street was dedicated to surface parking.

The AHEC five-year capital improvements program for FY2008-2013 shows six projects and over \$313 million in state funded requests over the next five years. This includes funding for the Science Building which was originally submitted to CCHE in FY2006-07 as a \$65 million project. Due to construction inflation, programmatic changes and updated architectural assessments, the project is now estimated to cost over \$111 million. The Commission has approved program plan amendments justifying the cost increases over the past two years and AHEC has also been diligent in informing the Capital Development Committee on cost increases. As the campus further develops implementation strategies for the master plan, it is expected that the distribution of costs will be further refined in future five-year plans.

According to Department of Higher Education (DHE) Policies Section III, Part D, Commission approved facilities master plans should be re-examined every ten years. Given the changing nature of development needs and fiscal constraints, institutions can

submit amendments to their master plans in the interim to incorporate new development strategies and changing needs without undertaking the task of creating a new master plan. Section III, Part D of DHE policy states:

A long-range plan must be developed as a flexible framework for campus growth that recognizes the dynamic nature of higher education. As enrollments grow or decline and/or as academic programs change or become more comprehensive to serve new student needs, campus facility needs inevitably will change. A facility master plan must be capable of meeting these changing circumstances. To ensure that a Long-Range plan remains valid, an institution must do one of the following before the ten-year life of the plan expires:

- *Create a new Long-Range Plan;*
- *Send a letter to DHE stating that all assumptions contained in the master plan are still valid and that all facilities' needs outlined in it are still needed but have not yet been completed; or*
- *Amend the master plan to bring it up to date.*

Thus, at least every ten years the long-range plan for each campus must be re-examined or updated in order to keep it current.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

The master plan update submitted by AHEC supplies a conceptual vision for future development that should contribute to a vibrant campus and a more fluid relationship with Downtown Denver. The plan document also creates an ambitious plan for the campus to confront extremely challenging space needs on a heavily utilized campus. While the submitted plan provides a sound conceptual framework for new development on campus, implementation and financing of the proposed planning solutions will be an ongoing concern.

Department staff submitted the following 24 questions regarding the master plan update which have been sufficiently answered by the campus. Campus responses are shown below in italics.

- 1) The Plan shows Phase 3 of the implementation strategy going to 2012. What is the overall planning time frame for this update? When does AHEC estimate full build out to occur as illustrated in the submitted Master Plan?
The master plan is a 20 year plan with full build out not anticipated until 2026/2027.
- 2) Did a space utilization study occur in conjunction with this planning effort? If not, where were the included utilization numbers obtained from.

Space utilization numbers were obtained from campus facilities planners at the outset of the project, and verified (and sometimes corrected) by both the Master Plan team and facilities personnel. As part of the verification process, representatives of the facilities department walked each of the campus buildings with representatives from the 3 institutions to qualify space size, type and use.

- 3) For what FCI ranges are building demolitions being considered?

In the case of the Technology Building, that building will eventually be demolished due to it being a one story structure which underutilizes the site. In the next 20 years, more space will be needed and it does not make sense to have one story buildings on the campus. The other buildings facing possible future demolition include the Plaza Building (again to create more space in the center of the campus once the building reaches the end of its useful life in 10-15 years), St. Francis Center (repairs needed on the building are far too costly and it makes better sense to eventually build a new structure as part of the CCD Neighborhood), 7th Street Classroom Building (in order to accommodate field space) and the library. If funds are ever raised, a new library facility is needed on the campus. Though the building may have some architectural value, the facility is not built to handle the needs and space requirements (study rooms, computer workstations, etc) of a 21st Century library serving three institutions. While FCI was not necessarily used to determine demolition, the demolition recommendations were based on conversations the Master Planning team had with AHEC facilities personnel and members of the three institutions, as well as assumptions of continued building decay in certain instances.

- 4) How is the transfer of recreation fields scheduled to occur? How will this transfer plan manage existing recreation, athletic, academic and auxiliary facilities and programs affected by the move?

Athletic facilities will need to be relocated in one to two phases. Existing facilities will remain in use until new ones are operating on the west end of campus. Moving athletic facilities will also necessitate examining the relocation of the existing PE/Events Center to ensure the academic departments that use the athletic fields will have a proximate location. An athletic/recreation facilities study has been completed to quantify the amount and type of space needed, and we are now working to refine that list. Additionally, if University of Colorado Denver moves forward with athletic programs, as they are currently discussing, that will impact the amount and type of facilities needed.

- 5) Please explain the planning process that AHEC has undertaken in order to produce the plan in its present form.

The master planning team – Studio Insite, Sasaki Associates and U3 Ventures – was hired through a competitive process in 2006. Once on board, visioning sessions were held with all of the institutions on the campus to determine needs, examine physical conditions, parking, light rail impact and pedestrian/vehicular access. The master planning team worked with the Master Plan and Facilities subcommittee of the Auraria Board, with regular presentations to the Board itself. The team also met with student and

faculty groups on the campus. Concepts were developed and approved by the Master Plan and Facilities subcommittee.

- 6) The plan seems to include further physical separation of the three schools using the Auraria Campus. Will this mean less shared facilities between the colleges on campus? *The neighborhoods are intended to provide the opportunity for the administrative center and specialized academic space of each institution to have a distinctive and recognizable character – through a combination of architecture, signage and exterior treatments – while maintaining a level of visual continuity and shared identity for the larger Auraria Campus. The campus design guidelines will address guidelines for creating individual institutional identity. New construction of academic buildings in these neighborhoods will equitably share academic space through common scheduling and the development of space policies. If the space has been funded by an individual institution then the prioritization of space use and compensation for academic space use by other institutions will be provided based on an agreed upon cost auditable formula.*

Additionally, the creation of institution specific buildings will free up other classrooms on campus allowing for a larger pool of available classrooms. The campus continues to remain land locked, and sharing of facilities is the only way to ensure enough space for all three institutions. The Auraria concept of sharing space and uses is being reaffirmed in a new memorandum of understanding currently being developed between AHEC and the three institutions.

- 7) Are these institutions seeking further autonomy on the AHEC campus? If so, what are the perceived benefits or drawbacks of further institutional autonomy on campus? *The institutions are not seeking further autonomy on the campus. What they are seeking is a sense of identity so that students of the respective schools will know there's a place on the campus where administrative services and special programs are housed for their institution. Today there are no respective identifiers on the campus – other than signage at the main corners of the campus and institution names up on buildings along Speer Boulevard. The Auraria Campus is the home for each institution, but it is the institutions themselves that provide the academic service and rely on identity.*
- 8) Is the role of AHEC in facilities planning to remain relatively the same in the foreseeable future? *AHEC will continue to provide facilities services to the campus, except for those areas where mixed-use development (mainly private non academic uses) will occur, as is done today. AHEC and the institutions are currently discussing how capital construction will be pursued in the future in regards to institution specific buildings. AHEC will continue to seek controlled maintenance funds for the campus as well.*

- 9) How does this master plan affect program plans that have already been approved by CCHE? Which colleges will be the primary users of the planned Science and South Classroom buildings?

This master plan does not impact program plans already approved by CCHE. The Science Building will continue to be a shared building used by all three institutions as outlined in the program plan. The South Classroom building will also continue to serve all three institutions, with a focus on serving as the heart of the Community College of Denver. The CCD neighborhood is intended to be the heart of CCD, centered on their existing use of South Classroom, but again shared space will continue to be a priority on this campus and in the neighborhoods.

- 10) How will the planned campus facilities intensification affect current open space on campus? What is the size of open space before and after full build out in terms of square feet or acres? What percentage increase or decrease of current campus open space does this change equate to?

Most of the new construction shown in the Master Plan will occur in existing surface parking lots and have little impact to the existing open space. This new construction will enhance the open space network on the campus by creating open space in areas where none previously existed. Open space areas around the Lawrence Street mall will continue to exist and be an integral part of the campus environment. While the green space adjacent to Speer Boulevard will be filled in with development, it is currently unused open space and serves only to isolate the campus. There will continue to be green space between future buildings and Speer Boulevard, as Denver has indicated buildings must be located about 40-50 feet behind the right-of-way.

The location and orientation of future campus buildings is intended to provide spaces that are less ambiguous in nature than much of the open space today. This is intended to increase the amount of activity on campus open spaces and provide a larger variety of outdoor spatial scales and types.

- 11) How do the proposed master plan land uses fit with future land use plans in and around the area as delineated in Blueprint Denver/Denver's Comprehensive Plan?

All of the downtown area has been designated as an area of change in Blueprint Denver. It is likely that the Pepsi Center lands will eventually be redeveloped into a mixed-use entertainment district, and the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood will also have future redevelopment focused on residential uses. The master plan envisions strengthening the academic environment on the campus and creating mixed-use development that will serve the campus and surrounding community. The uses discussed in the master plan will work with whatever happens on the Pepsi Center, provide amenities for the La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood and residents of Lower Downtown. The mixed-use development is not intended to compete with downtown retail, but provide another option for residents. Additionally, we have been working with the

City of Denver on their station area planning, to ensure active uses are provided near the Auraria West light rail station.

- 12) How does the campus foresee the high-end multi-unit housing developments currently being constructed on 15th street across from campus affect the interaction between the city and the campus?

The only impact of the housing going in on 15th Street is to provide a greater imperative to increase connections to downtown and provide amenities for those residents within walking distance. The more people are aware of the campus, the more likely they are to remember the schools when looking to take a class or when they need employees.

- 13) How does the campus plan to reconcile the high-end market place of downtown with low-income students using the campus? Will the inclusion of private development on campus accentuate this disparity?

Private development on campus must first and foremost serve its surrounding community of students, faculty and staff. This is one of the reasons the earlier development of Tivoli as a shopping mall failed – it was too high end for the campus community. The campus is here to serve the larger population looking to further their education, regardless of income status. While many of the new developments in downtown focus more on the high-end user, there are also projects incorporating affordable housing units as required by Denver. Providing opportunities for people of various incomes to mix together creates a more vibrant environment that only benefits the campus.

- 14) Will students be users of possible private development opportunities? Under what circumstances?

Yes students should and hopefully will be users of the private development on campus. For those that we have talked with, they desire to locate on campus in order to make use of the student work force and provide amenities that are currently lacking. For instance, a media company moving their offices to the campus would be able to provide students from all three institutions with real world experience, and faculty would be able to provide consulting services. Another amenity that would be great for the campus would be an art supply store that would serve UC Denver's School of Architecture and Planning, along with the art programs of all three institutions.

- 15) Commercial uses proposed for private development could limit a portion of overall land use on campus devoted to academic use, possibly forcing academic uses beyond the scope of this plan to move offsite over the long term. Was this considered in the development of this plan? Are there justifications aside from monetary to include private development on the current Auraria Campus?

Any private development will be done on a lease basis, to ensure that if that land is needed in the future for purely academic purposes, it will be available. The Auraria Campus and its student population is undergoing a dramatic shift. No longer do we have students who show up for a class and leave. Students now want a vibrant campus that

gives them reasons to stay and play on the campus. Allowing private development will bring in some of those opportunities and provide more life on the campus. The master planning process shows more build out than is necessary to handle student growth over the next 20 years. Additionally, if more space is needed, the campus will be able to increase the height of future buildings on campus over the recommended 4 stories. In addition to the monetary benefit of campus, the private development will provide job and shopping opportunities to the students/faculty/staff and help create an exciting urban environment giving the campus more activity than it has today.

- 16) Please provide an estimate of what percentage of proposed new development included in the plan could conceivably be financed from bonds generated as a result of revenues generated from private development on campus.

Revenues from the public private development will be one of several sources, including student fees and gifts, which will be used in the build out of the campus. More specific information will be available as we continue with detailed planning of the public private development opportunities.

- 17) How would the proposed possibility of an additional cultural center on campus complement or interact with existing cultural facilities (such as the Denver Center Performing Arts Complex) surrounding campus?

The civic/community use is a proposed use for the urban district but at this time there are no exact plans for what that use would become. It will likely end up either being academic space or could be a space for some of the outreach programs for the institutions. Any use located within the urban district will need to complement downtown and the other cultural facilities surrounding the campus.

- 18) How would proposed on-campus bike lanes be linked to surrounding city bike routes?

Presently Denver bike lanes near the campus run along Lawrence, Arapahoe and from Invesco Field along Walnut Street and then to Auraria Parkway. The campus currently does not have any designed bike lanes through campus as part of the City of Denver program. Additionally, today there is a bike dismount zone in the campus core between Arapahoe and Larimer Streets due to the conflict with pedestrian traffic. The master plan proposes allowing bike traffic on the Larimer and Arapahoe alignments through the campus. The Lawrence St mall will not allow bike use in order to maintain it's pedestrian nature through campus. Bike users will be able to walk or ride their bike and connect with the Cherry Creek bike trail at Lawrence and Speer. Bike riders will be able to get off the Auraria West light rail station and go up the Curtis/Arapahoe Street alignment and cross the campus by using 7th Street. This will allow good connections in to the larger City bike trail network. As these areas are redesigned, the campus will look at whether marking bike lanes makes the most sense or just allowing bike and pedestrian traffic to mix.

- 19) Please explain why the proposed location of the Urban District at the northeast point of the campus was chosen. Why was this location chosen over a location closer to one of the campus's light rail stations that could have offered the possibility of Transit Oriented Development?

Allowance of private development at the Colfax light rail station is not possible because it is already in use for academic purposes, and since the area is home to many of CCD's programs that area is better suited to serve as their neighborhood. The master plan does make an allowance for public private development along 5th Street adjacent to the Auraria West light rail station. This area will not have the same level of development as the northeast corner of campus because of its lack of visibility and access to surrounding neighbors. While this area is well served by transit and is predicted to be the 2nd busiest station, it will primarily serve transfers and not people getting off with time to spare. However, given its light rail accessibility and the location of Campus Village, the area will hopefully provide some service retail (coffee shop, deli), a bank and some office uses. The northeast corner of the campus (Speer and Auraria Parkway) was seen as the most viable for public private development due to its proximity to downtown, ability to create a vibrant development that would compliment lower downtown, and provide an active environment for students, faculty and staff adjacent to the highly used Tivoli Student Union.

- 20) How do Greenprint Denver initiatives and recommended sustainability efforts, outlined in the master plan, overlap with High Performance State Buildings statutory requirements?

Key Greenprint Denver initiatives include reducing greenhouse gas emissions (an element also needed to meet the President's Climate Commitment), planting more trees (which will happen as surface parking lots are redeveloped), and increase recycling (the campus is developing a recycling program through the student fee initiated Sustainable Campus Program). These Greenprint Denver initiatives complement the goals of the High Performance State Buildings requirements (pursuing elements of high performance design and seeking LEED certification) as both will provide a more sustainable campus. Additionally, LEED criteria often provide points for other things being done around the specific building itself to increase sustainability and energy efficiency.

- 21) The implementation plan includes the development of precinct plans for planned campus neighborhoods. Will these precinct plans be submitted to CCHE as they are developed?

Neighborhood plans for each institution will be approved by the Auraria Board and each institution's board for approval. They will not be submitted to CCHE for approval. They will be reviewed to ensure their compliance with the overall Auraria Campus master plan through the Auraria Board of Directors process.

- 22) For the proposed Urban District, a hotel/conference center is considered to be a possibility within the plan. This use seems to be outside the spirit of the Urban District. Why is this use being considered?

This use is very much in line with the goals set up for the Urban District as it will provide an amenity for both downtown and the campus, and more importantly it will house facilities for Metro State's hospitality program. The hotel is intended to be a learning center for the program where students will work to gain real world experience. The hotel likely will cater more to the business class, along with visitors to the campus, LoDo and the Pepsi Center.

- 23) Will finance planning as mentioned on page 44 of the master plan have the possibility of affecting what elements of the plan can be constructed?

Financing will play a large role in what elements of the plan can be constructed. Given the limited amount of state funds available for new academic buildings on the campus, we will have to implement some of these measures in order to get more academic space. It is not financially feasible or beneficial for the students, faculty and staff to continue to add trailers to the campus.

- 24) What financing possibilities/sources will AHEC consider in finance planning?

Some financing possibilities may include using revenue from private leases to provide bonds for the construction of new academic facilities, examining the creation of a student facility fee, private donations, and grants.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Colorado Commission on Higher Education approve the Auraria Higher Education Center Master Plan Update 2007.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. 23-1-106 Duties and powers of the commission with respect to capital construction and long-range planning

(3) The commission shall review and approve master planning and program planning for all capital construction projects of institutions of higher education on state-owned or state-controlled land, regardless of source of funds, and no capital construction shall commence except in accordance with and approved master plan, program plan, and physical plan.

(4) The commission shall ensure conformity of facilities master planning with approved educational master plans and facility program plans with approved facilities master plans.