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Suffolk University News

SPECIAL EDITION

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Vol. 34, No. 5

Institutional Master Plan: A Blueprint for the University's Future



Artists' renderings show the Modern Theatre renovation and the projected view of 20 Somerset St., as seen from Ashburton Place.

THE UNIVERSITY CELEBRATED A MILESTONE THIS SUMMER when the city approved its Institutional Master Plan—a move that sets the stage for the next 10 years of campus growth and development.

Much of the initial focus has been on two key projects that will move forward as a result of the master plan approval: Construction is slated to begin this fall on the Modern Theatre and residence hall in Downtown Crossing. And the proposed state-of-the-art academic building and art school at 20 Somerset St. has entered its design and permitting phase.

But the approval also paves the way for a student center, an athletic center and more residential housing in the next phase of Suffolk's growth. The master plan identifies those needs and establishes a blueprint for their development in a way that benefits the University and the city, while minimizing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

"With all the needs the University has for facilities expansion, we now have a much clearer path to getting it done," said John Nucci, vice president for external affairs. "This will be the first time

that the need for and potential locations of more residence halls, a student center and an athletic center are identified in an approved master plan."

The Boston Redevelopment Authority board unanimously backed Suffolk's 10-year master plan in a June 24 vote. The city's Zoning Commission followed suit one month later, and the plan was then signed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino.

Nucci praised the vision of University President David J. Sargent. "President Sargent is completely tuned in to student and faculty expectations for a 21st century university, and he has provided the leadership to keep Suffolk ahead of the curve as technology and infrastructure needs evolve," said Nucci. "He is working to bring new academic, housing and student services facilities online in a way that benefits both the campus and the city."

Community process

Perhaps most striking was the strong support the Institutional Master Plan and the two development projects received from

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A Message from the President

EACH ACADEMIC YEAR BEGINS WITH A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND purpose as colleagues reconnect, new community members are made welcome, and we begin anew the mission of educating our students.

There is an extra spark of enthusiasm this year as we embark on new campus building projects.



Lori Bate, president of the Beacon Hill Civic Association, and President David J. Sargent sign historic agreement as John Nucci, Elizabeth Leary and Michael Feeley of Government and Community Affairs look on. (Photo by John Gillooly)

This special edition of the SUN details the University's Institutional Master Plan, which lays out how our campus will change over the next 10 years and describes two new building projects that will make our campus more functional and welcoming.

Incoming students now demand housing, and by offering safe, on-campus housing to undergraduates at a time when the cost of living is rising, we ease their transition into the world of higher education. We also are realigning classrooms and enfolded the New England School of Art & Design more closely into our core campus.

Our students continue to come to us from all walks of life, and they hail from across the nation and around the world. We offer them the opportunity to gain a superb education with the added advantage of easy access to the historic, business, government and cultural resources in downtown Boston. They in turn will benefit the city through their good works and by breathing additional life into downtown Boston all day and into the evening.

The enormous effort that went into the Institutional Master Plan process involved several departments across campus, particularly John Nucci and his team in Government and Community Affairs, and I thank them. We also owe our gratitude to the community members and city officials who worked diligently to help us fine-tune the plan so that it will benefit the community as well as the University.

David J. Sargent
President

At a Glance...

Suffolk University's Institutional Master Plan:

- Creates a framework for the University's growth and development over the next 10 years
- Includes two specific projects—the Modern Theatre residence hall in Downtown Crossing and a state-of-the-art academic building at 20 Somerset Street
- Outlines geographic clusters for potential growth in the downtown area so that future expansion will not be concentrated in a single cluster
- Broadens a non-expansion zone on Beacon Hill. The University has agreed not to add any new classroom seats in any building on Beacon Hill. Also, no dormitory, student center or athletic center will be built on Beacon Hill
- Caps the University's undergraduate enrollment in Boston at the equivalent of 5,000 full-time students over the next 10 years
- Includes a goal of providing residential housing for 50 percent of students in the next 10 years and 70 percent within 20 years
- Details future University needs, including a student center and an athletic facility
- Was developed with a city-appointed task force made up of representatives from neighborhoods surrounding the University

Institutional Master Plan

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Suffolk's neighbors. During both the BRA board and Zoning Commission hearings, public officials and neighbors lined up to speak in favor of the plan. Not one person spoke in opposition.

That kind of support didn't come easy.

It was the result of 18 months of close collaboration with a city-appointed task force made up of representatives from neighborhoods surrounding Suffolk, including Beacon Hill, the West End, the North End, Downtown Crossing and the Ladder District. Over the course of about 20 task force meetings, the University heard and addressed concerns, answered questions, and made modifications to the development projects and the master plan based on input from task force members.

"This could not have been done without Mayor Menino's and the Boston Redevelopment Authority's leadership and the painstaking

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Key Master Plan Moments

March 1, 2007

City-appointed community task force discusses Suffolk's priorities, recent growth and transformation in the first of about 20 meetings.

June 30, 2007

The University reaches agreement with the Millennium, Parkside and Grandview condominium complexes in support of 10 West.

Jan. 11, 2008

The University files an Institutional Master Plan Notification Form with the Boston Redevelopment Authority. It includes two projects: the Modern Theatre residence hall and the 20 Somerset academic building.

June 9, 2008

Beacon Hill Civic Association board votes overwhelmingly to approve a landmark agreement with Suffolk University.

April 18, 2008

Institutional Master Plan is filed with the BRA.

July 23, 2008

The city's Zoning Commission approves the master plan.

June 26, 2007

Public meeting is held on 10 West St. residence hall.

Jan. 9, 2008

10 West opens.

January 31, 2008

Public meeting is held regarding the University's forthcoming Institutional Master Plan and the Modern Theatre.

May 15, 2008

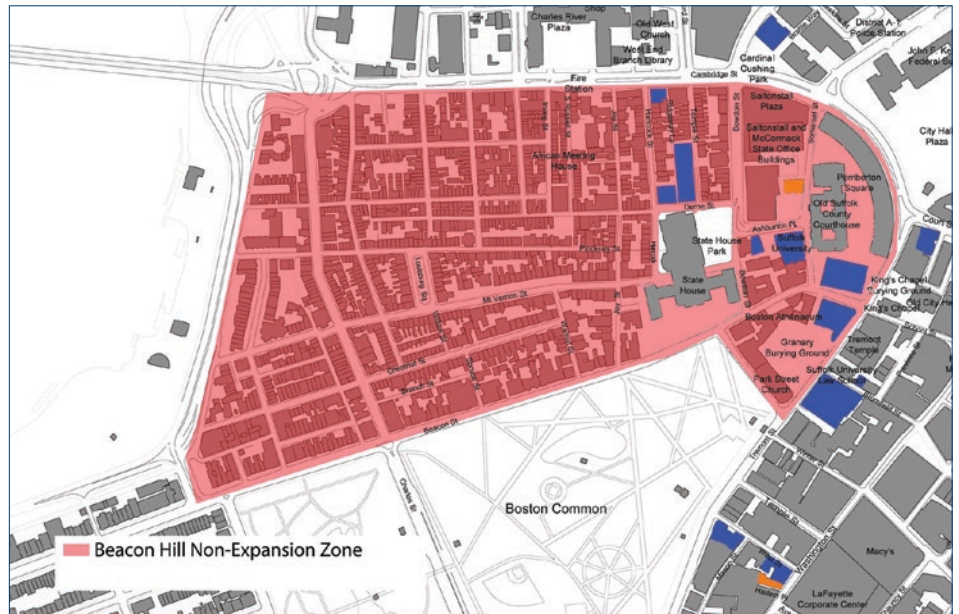
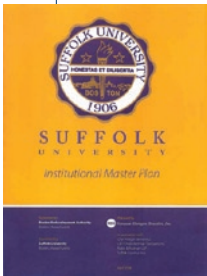
Public hearing held regarding the Institutional Master Plan and the Modern Theatre proposal.

June 24, 2008

The Boston Redevelopment Authority unanimously approves the University's Institutional Master Plan.

July 24, 2008

Mayor Thomas M. Menino signs the master plan.



Continued from page 2

ing work of the community task force,” Nucci said. “Their contributions created a better master plan as well as an example of how the community process should work.”

Road map to the future

The Institutional Master Plan provides a road map for future growth by identifying general areas in downtown Boston—or “clusters”—where the University could potentially expand. The idea is that future development will be dispersed throughout the clusters, rather than concentrated in a single area.

Gaining support from Suffolk's neighbors, including those on Beacon Hill, was seen as critical to moving the master plan and its development projects forward.

In late spring, the University reached a landmark agreement with the Beacon Hill Civic Association. That pact, hammered out through a series of intense negotiations, broadens a non-expansion zone on Beacon Hill. Suffolk agreed not to expand its footprint on the hill and will not build dorms, an athletic center or a student center there.

Beyond the proposed academic building at 20 Somerset, the University agreed not to add any more classroom or lab seats on Beacon Hill. The College will shift 400 seats from the Temple Street area to 20 Somerset, once that building opens.

The University set a goal of housing 70 percent of its students in the next 20 years and agreed to cap its Boston campus enrollment at the equivalent of 5,000 full-time undergraduate students over

the 10-year life of the master plan. Suffolk also will make its paid Boston Police details and neighborhood response unit a permanent part of its operation.

In turn, the Beacon Hill Civic Association agreed to support the 20 Somerset St. and Modern Theatre projects and agreed not to oppose the 10-year Institutional Master Plan.

Public officials praised the agreement for protecting the interests of Suffolk's neighbors while allowing for sensitive and well-planned expansion.

“Universities and colleges are crucial to Boston's economy and prominence, but institutional expansion needs to be done in a way that is in harmony with our great neighborhoods,” Menino said in early June, when the pact was announced.

Meanwhile, the agreement already has eased friction between the University and Beacon Hill neighbors. And it has been lauded in newspaper editorials and elsewhere as a model for other expanding colleges and universities that face tensions with surrounding communities. ▀



Modern Theatre: A New Building with a Familiar Face

THE RENOVATION OF THE MODERN Theatre building will not only create a 197-bed residence hall, but it also will keep the spirit of the old Modern Theatre alive with a first-floor gallery and performance space that can be used for functions, according to Adrian LeBuffe of CBT, the architectural firm designing the new building.

The façade of the historic building will be taken apart stone by stone and sent to a masonry restoration expert before the remainder of the structure is torn down. When the residence hall/theater opens in fall 2010, it will be a completely new building with a fully restored face.

Architects worked with the University to design a building that will meet students' needs, be environmentally sustainable and preserve the historic landmark.

The Modern Theatre was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 as part of the Washington Street Theatre District. In 1995 it was designated a Boston Landmark.

Building history

In 1876, four years after the Great Boston Fire destroyed the nearby business district, Architect Levi Newcomb designed the building in the High Victorian Gothic style. It housed showrooms and warehouse space for the Dobson Brothers, the largest carpet manufacturers in the United States.

In 1913, when motion pictures began moving from makeshift nickelodeons to theaters, the Dobson Building was converted into the Modern, the first Boston theater designed specifically to show films. Admission was 15 cents, and musical accompaniment was provided on an Estey Organ designed specifically for use in the theater. The Modern had the first of these organs installed in the eastern United States.

Clarence Blackall was the architect for the Modern Theatre conversion. His firm also designed 13 other theaters in Boston, including the surviving Colonial, Wilbur and Metropolitan, now known as the Wang Center for the Performing Arts. The firm designed many other noteworthy buildings in Boston, including the Tremont Temple.

In 1928, the Modern Theatre premiered the first Boston showing of a "talkie"—*The Jazz Singer*. It also introduced the double feature in an effort to compete with newer



Modern Theatre as it appeared in 1915.

theaters showing movies and vaudeville together.

The Modern was used as a theater of some kind continuously until the 1980s, when it fell out of use. The intervening years have taken their toll on the structure, and the interior is now considered beyond repair. But Suffolk has stepped in to save the historic façade.

University steps in

"The University began looking at the building as a result of suggestions from area residents made during the University Master Planning Process," said Michael Feeley of Government & Community Affairs.

The building backs up to the new residence hall at 10 West St. and is around the block from the University's first residence hall at 150 Tremont St.

The Modern Theatre's ornate façade is cracking and will require significant

The building will feature a 184-seat theater that can be converted to a flat-floor function room. It will be used for performance, lectures, films and receptions.

restoration work, according to LeBuffe. The first three floors are constructed of Vermont marble, and the four upper floors of sandstone and brownstone.

"We'll mark the back of each of the several thousand stones as we remove them," said



Modern Theatre will enliven Downtown Crossing.

LeBuffe. "Deconstruction" of the rest of the building will follow, probably beginning in October and lasting as long as three months.

"By the first of the year we expect to have an empty site," said LeBuffe. Construction of the new, 12-story building is projected to take 20 months, with residence hall doors opening to students in fall 2010. The façade will be rebuilt in its original location, and, after restoration, can be expected to last another 100 years.

In addition to suite-style housing, the building will feature a 184-seat theater that can be converted from a classic proscenium format to a flat-floor function room. It will be used for performance, lectures, films and receptions. The lobby space in front of the theater will double as a gallery.

The building will be LEED certified. LEED is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and buildings that earn this certification employ

green design across all phases of design and construction. The building will be sustainable not only in the materials and systems used in construction, but also due to clean and efficient operation when the building comes into use. ▀



A bird's eye view of the new building that will house art studios and classroom space at 20 Somerset St.

20 Somerset to Present Lively and Quiet Sides

DESIGNERS OF THE PROPOSED ACADEMIC BUILDING AND art school at 20 Somerset Street faced the challenge of bringing active, public uses to one side of the building while respecting the sanctity and the serenity of the neighboring Garden of Peace on the other side.

The result is an emerging vision for a building that features two distinct approaches to two different façades, said Patrick Tedesco, principal with Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, the renowned architectural firm designing 20 Somerset. The building, now in its design and permitting phase, will become home to Suffolk's New England School of Art & Design as well as 10 general-use classrooms for the College of Arts and Sciences. Design is in its early stages and must still go through a comprehensive public review process with neighbors and city and state officials.

The south façade looking out onto Roemer Plaza and the Sawyer Building would feature an active lobby, art gallery and critique spaces for NESAD students to display their work.

"The idea is, it's a very vibrant façade that you can see into from Sawyer," Tedesco said. "It also helps enliven what will be an improved Roemer Plaza."

The plaza itself will be renovated with benches and landscaping, offering students and the general public an attractive, sunny outdoor space. The University also will use Roemer Plaza to commemorate the venerable history of the Metropolitan District Commission, whose headquarters were located in the now-abandoned building for more than seven decades. That history includes the conservation of thousands of acres of park land in and around Boston, including Olmstead's Emerald Necklace, the Charles River Esplanade, Castle Island and many other sites.

On the opposite, north side of the building, architects envision a quiet façade overlooking the Garden of Peace, the memorial that commemorates victims of homicide. "It was an urban design goal to respectfully try not to activate that side of the building," said Tedesco.

The building will be no taller than the current abandoned MDC building, so as not to cast additional shadows on the Garden of Peace.



Plans for 20 Somerset include an improved Roemer Plaza, offering an attractive outdoor space for students and the general public.

A statement from the Garden's board, delivered June 24 to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, described the planning process with Suffolk as "one of transparency and collaboration." The Garden had opposed a previous proposal for a high-rise dorm at 20 Somerset St.

"This time around we absolutely felt informed and consulted, especially regarding the design, as the building serves as a backdrop for the Garden," said Evelyn Tobin, who chairs the Garden's board. "We felt our concerns were not only heard but responded to in terms of how the design has evolved."

Art studios will be located on the north side of the building to take advantage of indirect light, avoiding heavy shadows and glare.

But not all New England School of Art & Design students need to work by natural light. Graphic designers, students working with computer-assisted-design software and others will have space in electronic studios at the core of the building, where natural light won't interfere with their work.

Classrooms on the ground floor and on two floors below grade level will serve a significant portion of the undergraduate population. They will have about 40 seats and will be used by the College of Arts and Sciences for general purposes.

The initial design for the façade facing Somerset Street features a mixture of glass and masonry. Chan Krieger has designed an impressive feature for that façade: a larger, tiered classroom that will slope down the side of the building along the grade of Somerset Street.

"We were very pleased conceptually with what they have come up with," said New England School of Art & Design Chairman Bill Davis. "I know there's a lot of work left, but at the schematic phase the architects have managed to incorporate the vast majority of what we were looking for."

Davis said students will get the large, unobstructed studio space needed for classical art, such as painting and drawing. In the art and design school's current location at 75 Arlington Street, larger rooms have columns in the middle, making for less than ideal space.

Plans for 20 Somerset call for an art and design library and gallery space that is larger than what the school has today, including a secondary gallery. "That space will become not just NESAD space, but clearly a central point for the University as a whole," said Davis.

"It's very exciting in that it will give us a permanent home," he added. "We haven't had that in 15 years." ▀

Voices on Campus: What will be the impact of the Institutional Master Plan?



“I’m excited about the opportunities these changes bring for the students, especially bringing the art students to the main campus, but also offering more housing. We have students coming from afar, and now more of them can have the advantage of living on campus. Centralized services also are helpful to students; one-stop shopping is important given all the demands on their time.”

—DEAN OF STUDENTS
ANN COYNE



“It’s been exciting to be on the ground floor of the planning for the Modern Theatre project. Suffolk will restore this historic space, which will give the University and the Theatre Department more visibility in the city. I’m particularly enthusiastic about the professional performing arts organizations we may be able to partner with in this space.”

—NORA LONG, THEATRE
DEPARTMENT MARKETING &
SPECIAL PROJECTS SUPERVISOR



“It will be great to have more students able to live on campus and experience our wonderful city. When students live in residence halls we are better able to ease their transition from high school by providing more structure; we can plant the seeds of success. And the Modern Theatre will give us another space on campus for our many students engaged in the performing arts and other campus programs.”

—DAVE DEANGELIS, DIRECTOR
OF STUDENT ACTIVITIES



“NESAD will have the best of both worlds at 20 Somerset Street, retaining our small, tight-knit community while becoming better integrated with the main campus. The design and construction of the art school’s new, state-of-the-art facility takes into consideration the environmental impact, and it will be a much more vibrant place for the arts than where we are now.”

—SUZANNE JOHN,
DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC &
INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES,
NESAD

THE APPROVAL OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN IS A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT for the University. With a blueprint in place for sensible growth and development, Suffolk can look forward to a very bright future in Boston.

Many pieces had to come together to reach this point. It could not have happened without the vision and leadership of President David J. Sargent. President Sargent has been tireless in his efforts to provide the best academic setting and facilities for our students.

Also critical was the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the Boston Redevelopment Authority in bringing together neighbors and helping to align their interests with the interests of the University.

Thanks also go to the tremendous Suffolk team in External Affairs, including Mike Feeley, Elizabeth Leary and Kristyn O’Brien, as well as Gordon King in Facilities Planning and Greg Gatlin and his team in Public Affairs. And thank you to Alex Krieger and David Gamble of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz for the consultation expertise they brought to the community planning process.

Finally, the Institutional Master Plan is a far better document because of the many hours of work, creative ideas, dedication and encouragement provided by the group of neighbors and stakeholders who make up the community task force. Suffolk University is grateful for your efforts.

John Nucci
Vice President for External Affairs