

DATE: January 28, 2016

SUBJECT: University of Memphis Master Plan Update

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Approval

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Campus master plans are an essential element of higher education public policy. Master plans provide an opportunity for long range planning that incorporates the institution’s needs and ambitions, while also providing the public and state government a sense for how the institution might evolve over time. Whether the acquisition of strategic property, the need for additional or more efficient use of facilities, or analysis of how the campus footprint meshes with the surrounding community, master plans provide a method of anticipating and preparing for the future needs of the campus and the students it serves. THEC encourages institutions to produce a master plan every five years that addresses near, mid and long-term needs of the campus with respect to building and land use, open space, vehicular circulation and parking, and land acquisition opportunities.

MASTER PLAN SUMMARY

A high research, doctoral university, the University of Memphis currently serves 22,000 students in diverse programs from bachelor’s degrees to first professional degrees in law. As stated in its Strategic Plan, the university has a vision to be recognized as one of the country’s great metropolitan research universities. SmithGroupJJR, an architecture and planning firm charged with crafting the university’s master plan, projects enrollment to increase to 28,000 within ten years. The master plan was created with the goals of embracing this enrollment growth while also helping the university differentiate itself, increase research, and focus on student success. The plan provides space needs analyses and recommendations for all three of the university’s campuses (Main and Park Avenue in Memphis, and Lambuth in Jackson).

An initial recommendation for the Main Campus entails better integrating it with the adjacent Memphis community. The master plan suggests doing this by expanding the campus to the west and enhancing aesthetics along campus boundaries. The plan calls for a transformation that allows for the university to support projected enrollment growth while also shifting the campus toward a more residential focus. Non-academic and student service functions are moved to the perimeter of campus to allow for more walkability at the campus’ center. The master plan details in five phases this transformation — beginning with Phase I that includes current

construction such as the Walker Avenue Streetscape and concludes with Phase V that looks at the campus of the next decade and beyond, including the construction of three STEM buildings and three residence halls.

The Park Avenue campus, described in the master plan as primarily home to athletic facilities and otherwise underutilized buildings in disrepair, has an opportunity to become a more lively campus by focusing the campus' attention on health sciences and research, in addition to athletics. Over the next ten years and beyond the master plan recommends the removal of 20 buildings and the construction of 15 academic and research buildings across this campus.

Because the Lambuth campus is a recent acquisition for the University of Memphis (acquired in 2011) and has received significant attention in recent years, the master plan does not anticipate substantial change to the campus in the coming years. In the immediate future the master plan calls for addressing any health and safety issues at numerous facilities brought on by deferred maintenance, and the preservation of athletic facilities to meet the needs of the Jackson community.

RECOMMENDATION

The University of Memphis Master Plan Update provides comprehensive recommendations to help the university meet its vision of becoming a premier metropolitan research university. It has been thoroughly reviewed and THEC staff recommends it for approval.