

DATE: April 21, 2016

SUBJECT: University of Tennessee, Knoxville 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 incorporate 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 and 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

The main campus of the University of Tennessee system, located in Knoxville, is the oldest public university in Tennessee. Dating back two years before Tennessee was granted statehood, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) has grown to be the flagship research institution in Tennessee with aspirations to be one of the top 25 universities in the country. The campus encompasses 257 permanent buildings housing more than 15 million gross square feet of space, spread out over nearly 400 acres. With a directive to produce a guide for future construction, renovation, land acquisition and physical improvement, the Knoxville-based architecture firm Bullock Smith and Partners worked with the university to develop a cohesive yet flexible plan focused on the next 30 years. This long-range plan relies heavily on the directives included in the 2011 Master Plan but also incorporates many changes put into place at the university since that time. The UTK Master Plan Update also addresses the needs of the various units of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture.

The key to this master plan is an analysis of the current facilities’ conditions. Based on the current enrollment the analysis found that the university is experiencing a deficit in academic and research space of nearly 1.4 million gross square feet. Over the long-term, an additional one million gross square feet is identified for renovation. Using the THEC Space Allocation Guidelines in addition to other

resources, the Master Plan Update found an overall space deficit of 1.8 million gross square feet (GSF), including over 150,000 GSF of classroom and lab space, 1.2 million GSF of research space, and 500,000 GSF of physical education space. The Master Plan Update also suggests that the university should invest in more collaborative spaces and minimize specialized classroom spaces.

The Master Plan Update also provides detailed plans for creating additional open spaces and interconnected pedestrian areas across campus. This will require more street closures internal to campus, thoughtful placement of new or expanded permanent buildings, and development of small open spaces called “pocket parks.” This campus-wide site improvement plan also recommends moving parking to the perimeter of campus, developing a comprehensive bicycle system and expanding “The T” — the on-campus transit system.

Currently, 20 projects are funded or under construction across the UTK campus. In the immediate future the Master Plan Update calls for the renovation and expansion of two academic buildings, including one to address Estabrook Hall. Additional work funded by the campus to the West Campus is also identified. The plan also calls for extension of the Pedestrian Mall and a streetscape project along Volunteer Boulevard. Plans in the next decade include renovations to six different buildings, the construction of a new classroom lab building and additional parking and streetscape improvements. The 30 year vision includes sixteen new academic buildings or expansions/additions, a new student life building, and the completion of the parking and open space/streetscape projects.

RECOMMENDATION

The UTK Master Plan Update provides a comprehensive yet flexible plan to guide the university for the next three decades. It has been thoroughly reviewed and THEC staff recommend it for approval.