

### 3. OPTIONAL ELEMENT: URBAN DESIGN

#### Information Sources

EAR Existing Conditions Map 2000-2001

Sasaki Associates, Inc., interview notes, April 2000, November 2001, and Spring 2002, April 2004, June 2004

#### Purpose

The purpose of this element is to develop an understanding of the overall physical form of the development within the University and its relationship to the surrounding community, and based on this understanding provide conceptual principals for the organization of future development on the campus.

#### Data Requirements:

##### *Data A. Spatial Form of the Campus*

###### *1. Open Space Character*

The primary ordering elements of the campus are the gridded system of streets and alleys and the waterfront. The streets and alleys form a clearly defined framework to which buildings and pedestrian walks are oriented. The streets define the ground plane, dividing space into regularly sized squares or blocks. The alleys, running mid-block east to west, further divide the campus spaces and create a hierarchy of spaces within the block, as well as a hierarchy of linear circulation corridors.

The waterfront is a strong ordering element. The edge is clearly expressed and the defined space of the harbor is vast in its perceived volume. Whereas the street system marks the boundaries of contained spaces; the water's edge is an expansive space.

Campus buildings provide an opportunity for subdividing and enclosing spaces, defining edges, and reinforcing the established structure of streets and the water's edge. The existing campus environment is generally two-dimensional: spaces are largely defined on the ground plane. Buildings in the campus core, Campus Activity Center, Library, Davis Hall, and Coquina Hall, as well as the buildings on the peninsula, DEP buildings, Marine Science and the Marine Science Warehouse, are of a scale and height that allows for the potential to define adjacent spaces, direct sight lines, and contribute to the ordering structure

of the campus environment. Conversely, building at the campus edge such as Campus Police and neighboring USGS facilities do little to establish a perceived built edge. The scale is too small and the setback from the street edge and the placement of the buildings in relation to each other is too irregular to define either edges or the interior court spaces. The Piano Man Building provides an example of a built edge reinforcing the street corridor. However, the affect is minimal because the building is isolated, and limited in height.

The sense of enclosure and coherent, well-defined outdoor spaces is generally lacking on campus. Streets, alleys, water, and buildings create an underlying campus framework, but for the most part neither planting, open space, parking, nor pedestrian circulation reinforce or build upon this order. Four outdoor spaces stand out for the opportunity they offer to impact the overall physical organization of the campus.

- Peninsula Point – this triangular open space is striking in its contrast to the tightly contained narrow spaces found between pier buildings and along the pier edges. The space offers expansive views out across the Tampa Bay and Bayboro Harbor, and a prominent location for a public expression of campus identity. The edges are defined by the seawall on two sides and the front face of the Marine Science building on the third side. The space is currently lacking in its aesthetic appeal, and refinement of circulation and spatial organization. The trailers that were located at the seawall have been removed since the Marine Science Building was built. The arrangement of planting and pedestrian and vehicular circulation do not complement or strengthen the order or character of the space.
- Peninsula Northeast Facing Edge – This linear open space offers an opportunity for the development of inviting courtyard entries to Marine Science and precious green space within the hardscape of the highly developed pier. The built edge is strong enough to define and enclose the southwest edge. The perceived limits to the space extend to the seawall. Functionally and visually the space is divided into a parking/vehicular circulation realm and a planted pedestrian realm. Potential pedestrian access to the seawall and the visual inclusion of the water's edge are absent due to the current arrangement of adjacent vehicular circulation and parking, and lack of accommodation of the pedestrian. Existing trees reinforce the edge of the landscape zone and the walk; though the scale of the parking and pole lighting, in combination with the poorly ordered edge condition, overwhelms the adjacent planted pedestrian landscape.

- Core Campus Waterfront – This “L”-shaped waterfront is well defined by seawall and built edges. Poynter Park and the campus landscape south of the Library, and Davis and Coquina Halls read with a continuity of space defined by common seawall edge, continuous ground plane of lawn, and built edges. The north edge is contained by the Library, and Davis and Coquina Halls. The west edge is reinforced by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and the Dali Museum. Pedestrian circulation at the water’s edge exists from the Poynter Park waterfront through the campus waterfront to the Haney Landing Sailing Center where the peninsula connects to the campus core. Pedestrian links would benefit from improvement especially given that the School of Business is located in leased space on the south side of the Harbor.
- North and West Parcels – These lands to the north and west of the core campus are generally characterized by poorly defined edges and open ground plane. Building enclosure and space definition is minimal due to the limited number of buildings. Beginning efforts at street tree planting and continuous lawn edge have the potential to begin to define the linear pedestrian –vehicular corridors. However, existing street edge planting is minimal and inconsistent. Existing stands of mature trees within the blocks, for example, the area east and south of the apartment building on Fifth Avenue are an asset for future development of these sites.

The intensity of activity is strongest at the developed core campus area and the pier. The density of the built environment in these areas creates a level of activity, movement, and interest that gives the campus setting life and vitality. A secondary node of activity exists at the Campus Activity Center. The intensity of activity levels dissipates quickly as one moves out from the core. This factor affects both the perception of the campus identity and vigor, as well as the perception of personal security within the perimeter campus zone.

Linkages between activity nodes are limited and are not generally reinforced by building placement or planting. The visual and functional pedestrian connection between the core campus and the pier is weakened by the congestion of small structures and the discontinuous form of pedestrian circulation at the knuckle of land separating these two distinct areas of campus. The connection between the campus core, particularly the library – Davis Hall entry and the Campus Activity Center focuses on the linear corridor of Second Street. The connection is made difficult by distance, lack of unifying corridor planting, and the separation of these activity centers by expansive parking. Linkages to outlying buildings such as the Piano Man to the west and Campus Police to the north are

very poor, however as new construction replace vacant land or surface lots, the street edge will become more defined and connection to the core more clearly delineated.

## 2. *Campus Visual Structure*

The campus boundary is generally described by primarily Fourth Street South to the west, except for the Pediatric Research Center, which extends to Fifth Street South. Other campus boundaries include: Fifth Avenue South to the north, First Street South and the Bayboro Harbor to the east, and Eighth Avenue South and Bayboro Harbor to the south. Internal city streets include Second and Third Streets South, Sixth Avenue South, and Seventh Avenue South (not linked through the core). Though several road closings were proposed in the 1995 Master Plan (closing Sixth Avenue South between Third and First Streets South and closing Third Street South between Fifth and Eleventh Avenues) the city has not approved these recommendations.

The presence of the seawall, reinforced by built edges and existing lawn creates the strongest identifiable campus edge. In contrast, the campus edges to the north and west are indistinguishable from the surrounding urban fabric. Repeated elements such as street trees and campus-standard globe lighting which help identify campus property along Sixth Street adjacent to the Campus Activities Center have not been established for these edges. Fourth Street is a major vehicular corridor linking the campus to neighborhoods to the south, the Medical Center to the west and the downtown to the north. Neighborhood Plans and the Bayboro Harbor Redevelopment Plan call for streetscape improvements and commercial development along Fourth Street.

Fifth Avenue is critical as a campus entry edge for those arriving from I-175. Expansion of the campus to Fifth Avenue brings the development of the campus and downtown in closer proximity and improves the synergistic potential for the invigoration of the no-man's land between downtown and the existing campus core. Similarly, campus development to the west combined with future expansion of the Bayfront Medical Center toward the east has the potential to reform the largely vacant space currently separating these institutions. First Street separates the campus from the Albert Whitted Airport. The nature of this edge is one of a wall with no movement between zones, and few visual connections. Improvements have been made along Third Street South which have helped define this important corridor through the campus.

Existing campus entries, are located at the intersections of Fourth Street South and Fifth Avenue South, Second Street South and Fifth Avenue South, and Seventh

Avenue South and First Street South. Since 1995, a new entrance sign and landscape has been located at the intersection of Fourth Street South and Fifth Avenue.

Signage has been placed on the interstate directing the visitor to the campus. Campus information is provided at the new Welcome Center located at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Second Street.

The following list details major changes on-campus since 1995:

**Academic**

Pediatric Research (CRI)	48,500
Florida Center for Teachers	19,450
USGS	25,412

**Support**

Snell House	3,100
Williams House	3,171
Boathouse	
Welcome Center	
The Terrace (office units)	

**Property Acquisition**

Fountain Inn

**Site Improvements**

- Peninsula Entry Site Improvements (including demo)
- Recreation Field and entry sign feature
- Waterfront Park
- New Surface Parking Lots (including demo)

*Source: EAR for St. Petersburg Master Plan Update 2002 and information provided by the University in 2004.*

**Data B. Building service areas**

Buildings on the periphery and on the peninsula are generally serviced from access points off the existing street network or through adjacent parking lots. For the buildings along the waterfront, the service points are off First Street South and Seventh Avenue South.

***Data C. High activity buildings and spaces***

Four centers of high activity buildings exist on campus: Marine facilities on the pier; the Library, and Davis and Coquina Halls on the core campus; the Campus Activities Center on Second Street South and Sixth Avenue South; and the Pediatrics Research Institute. Though there are not many existing outdoor spaces, they remain less active than the building zones. The most active outdoor area is area along the waterfront. The campus could use more patio-like spaces with direct access to buildings.

***Data D. Functional linkages: pedestrian, auto, or other***

Primary vehicular linkages include: Fourth Street South connecting north to downtown and south to adjacent residential areas, as well as marking the transition from the USFSP campus to the Medical Center campus; Fifth Avenue South, the eastern extension of I-175 and the major route for drivers arriving on campus; and First Street South connecting the pier to waterfront functions to the north, including Bayfront Center, Albert Whitted Field and downtown retail. The primary internal vehicular route is a loop comprised of Second Street from Fifth Avenue to Seventh Avenue east to First Street. Primary pedestrian linkage is along Second Street South from the Campus Activities Center and parking lot 2 to the Library-Davis-Coquina building group.

***Data E. Character of existing buildings and open spaces with the context area***

The existing buildings and open space of the context area are structured around the grid framework of streets and alleys interrupted by open space corridors that parallel the Brooker Creek and the Salt Creek. The landform rises to the west from the coastal lands.

The buildings within the two blocks north of campus include a mix of small houses and larger apartment buildings. North of the zone, the downtown is characterized by increased density and height of buildings begins. The two blocks west of campus are characterized by a mix of vacant grass lots, parking lots, and small houses converted for use as community –social service and medical offices. West of this intermediate zone is the concentration of medical facilities associated with All Children’s Hospital and Bayfront Medical Center. Immediately southwest of the campus along Third Street South, the area is characterized by low, utilitarian rectangular garage and storage buildings with adjacent paved vehicle storage areas and high chain link fencing. South and west of this area are the Bartlett and Roser Park residential neighborhoods.

### Summary of Inventory Findings

- The existing spatial organization is defined primarily by the gridded system of streets and alleys and the water's edge, secondarily by campus buildings. Though improvements have been made since the 1995 master plan, such as Third Street South, in general, existing campus planting, open space, parking, and pedestrian circulation do not reinforce or build upon this order. New campus buildings are being built to reinforce the grid and begin connecting the edges of campus to both the core and to the urban context.
- The density of the campus core and pier peninsula creates a level of activity, movement and interest that gives the campus setting life and vitality. This collegial feeling and urban character should be preserved and enhanced on campus.
- It was noted that the absence of activity at the campus perimeter affects both the perception of the campus identity, and the perception of personal security within the perimeter campus zone. While new buildings on the perimeter are helping to increase activity and define those zones, landscaping and campus character should continue to be a priority on the periphery. The north, east and west edges fall within the domains of both the educational institution and the larger urban context. The expression of these edges should be explored in light of both internal and contextual concerns.

### Analysis Requirements:

#### *Analysis A. Development pattern of University buildings and open spaces*

The organization of buildings and open space on the St. Petersburg campus is distinguished by four areas of development:

1. Peninsula waterfront
2. Bayfront campus buildings
3. Properties north and northwest of the bayfront buildings
4. Pediatrics Research Institute

The oldest building group on campus is found on the peninsula. These buildings were constructed for bay-related functions and agencies and include: Marine Science, constructed in 1942 for use by the Merchant Marine Academy, and the wood frame DEP building. The peninsula development is characterized by its density of built structure, and tightly contained narrow spaces between buildings and along the pier edges. The

newer Marine Science and Florida Marine Research (DEP) buildings reinforce the density of the peninsula, adding building height of landmark quality to this area. The ground plane continues to be poorly shaped with the addition of these buildings. Spaces and corridors have little relationship to each other, and do not contribute to defining a clear form of circulation for vehicles and pedestrians. The open spaces of potentially greatest impact on the peninsula are the peninsula edge corridor and the point of the peninsula.

The bayfront buildings, Davis, Coquina, Administration, and Library define the bayfront edge of campus and establish distinct campus zones – bayside and inland. These buildings form a clearly defined built edge and reinforce the south side of the Seventh Avenue Corridor. They have a visible relationship to each other in form, mass, texture, and color.

The remainder of the campus, the inland blocks, are to a large extent yet to be developed by the University. Pre-existing buildings have been largely removed from these blocks, resulting in an inland campus area currently characterized by the grid structure of the streets and alleys and by vacant lots. Existing buildings, with the exception of the Campus Activity Center, the Florida Center for Teachers and the Children’s Research Institute (the latter two both built since the 1995 master plan), have been designed for non-university functions.

The Pediatrics Research Institute was constructed as per the 1995 master plan and extends the campus to the west.

Other than the two major new buildings, and the acquisition and demolition of the Fountain Inn, there have been no major changes in the existing development pattern or proposed development pattern of the campus since the 1995 Master Plan was completed. Proposed program elements such as housing and a parking garage will result in modifications to the land use pattern. Additionally, some of the facilities proposed in 1995 are no longer required such as the Ethics Center and the auditorium.

***Analysis B. Advantages and disadvantages of alternative spatial configurations by which future campus development may be organized.***

There are no major changes to the spatial configurations detailed in the 1995 Master Plan. However, the introduction of housing to the campus will require consideration with regard to potential sites and supporting amenities such as parking and recreation. Student housing has a different typology than academic or student life buildings, which impacts access and circulation as well as open space needs.

In general, the sites identified in the 1995 master plan as suitable for new buildings are not changing, although the building use may change. There may also be some instances where the final footprint of a building on a site changes, but the intent remains the same: the building is used to frame an open space or define a street edge.

***Analysis C. Alternative future activity location and linkage concepts for the campus and the context area.***

USFSP is organized and structured by the St. Petersburg street grid which serves to provide multiple connections between the campus, the downtown and surrounding institutions and amenities. Recent redevelopment north of the campus will serve to provide better links between the downtown and the campus.

In addition, the City of St. Petersburg is actively implementing a pedestrian and bicycle improvement plan to create the non-vehicular connections within the city that will increase the accessibility by other modes of transportation.