

Feedback on Vision and Strategies for SMU East Campus

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Purpose: This ad hoc committee met once on January 19, 2018 for about an hour and a half. It was assembled to brainstorm initial ideas on a vision and strategies for how SMU's East Campus may be developed in a way that best serves to enhance academic standing and excellence at SMU. The discussion considered both the general attributes of East Campus and how to take advantage of them as well as specific initiatives/infrastructure that should be included in development of East Campus. The notes were compiled by Paul Krueger with input from the participants.

General Attributes and Considerations

East Campus is a 15-acre contiguous lot east of the main SMU campus with all but two buildings currently owned by SMU. It's bordered on the south by the Magnolia Hotel, on the north by the Turley Law Center (Windle Turley, '65, SMU Law), on the east by the DART light rail tracks, and on the west by U.S. 75 Central Expressway. Several aspects of this available resource present some unique opportunities, and some challenges.

Access. East Campus is on prime real estate next to Central Expressway. This makes it easy to find and access for those driving to SMU. Many current activities and initiatives funnel people onto the SMU Main Campus, but it is not always easy for the general public to find the activity of interest on the Main Campus or determine where to park once here. This presents an excellent opportunity to connect better with the community through the East Campus.

Connection with the community can be strengthened with better commuter access to East Campus. East Campus is approximately half a mile from two DART stations (Lovers Lane Station and Mockingbird Station), but the walk or bike ride from either station is difficult or directly adjacent to busy streets. If an agreement or partnership could be reached with the city to provide a reasonable right-of-way between the DART stations and East Campus, manicured walking/biking paths could be provided for commuters or community members heading to East Campus.

One of the challenges presented by East Campus is access from the Main Campus. Currently access is only available along SMU Blvd, which, due to traffic, makes it inconvenient to take a golf cart or bike to East Campus. Walking is not pleasant given the high traffic on SMU Blvd and lack of dedicated pedestrian access. It is essential for East Campus to maintain a strong connection to the Main Campus in order to provide the synergy necessary to make both flourish and prevent East Campus from simply being an isolated appendix of the University. Increased or enhanced shuttle bus access would help, but improved pedestrian access would nurture the community feel of both campuses. Thinking long-term, at deck park over U.S. 75 to provide access between campuses would strengthen both.

Community Interaction. Because East Campus is adjacent to and surrounded by the community, it provides an interesting opportunity for interaction with the community at large. Its location may make it more hospitable to business owners and entrepreneurs interested in collaborating with SMU faculty and students. Because of local governments' differing interpretations of what constitutes not-for-profit activity, research and development work leading to technology commercialization may be more acceptable on East Campus than on the Main Campus. Additionally, its position between the Main Campus and the Dallas community allows for East Campus to have a different "feel" from the Main Campus that can blend into and transform the community around it. Conversely, the close proximity of

eateries to East Campus allows for opportunities to build collaborations and share ideas over lunch in an open and collegial setting.

Development of East Campus

When thinking about specific ways to develop East Campus, the group felt a number of characteristics were essential:

- **Cross-Fertilization.** The design and development of East Campus should promote bringing people together and building synergy. Here synergy is used in the broadest possible sense to mean not only interdisciplinary between scientific or engineering disciplines, but also to bring the arts and humanities and STEM fields together. This will expand opportunities for collaboration and specifically is useful for commercialization as it enriches the perspective on technological developments.
- **Creative.** The space should be open intellectually to encourage the creative process. It should be thought of as not just an innovation hub, but an innovation and creativity hub (or quad, see below).
- **Community.** The space should be designed with a community feel, including walking paths, open areas, picnic areas (perhaps including BBQs). It's worth considering if existing resources (such as the natatorium) could be made available to East Campus tenants. At the same time, it's important that East Campus not look too much like a traditional campus. Indeed, traditional Georgian architecture seems antithetical to "innovation". Rather, development of East Campus should fit with the surrounding community and be able to easily attract and engage partnerships with local businesses, which may feel more comfortable outside of a traditional university setting. It is also an important consideration in order to engage the broader community with the creative activities and people on East Campus.
- **Colony.** While East Campus must maintain a strong connection with the Main Campus to fully utilize the talent and resources in both locations, East Campus must not simply be an "arm" of the Main Campus. It must be a fully functioning unit with unique capabilities and a unique environment in order to foster the synergy, creativity, and innovation that will bring additional recognition and resources to the University. In particular, it is important to have a critical mass of activities and personnel to provide sufficient cross-talk and collaboration for the creative process to flourish.

In considering a specific development plan, there are many options, but one that can address the characteristics above is to consider an innovation and creativity **quad**, rather than a hub. Specifically, the "quad" concept brings with it the idea that the campus would bring together a diverse set of interests in close proximity, rather than emphasize any one particular set of activities/disciplines. It would naturally involve several (three or four at least) different buildings with (potentially) different emphases. Considerations of the characteristics of these buildings might include the following:

- **STEM Research.** A critical part of a vibrant university research community is strength in the STEM disciplines. It is an essential component of both rankings and public perception of university quality. Strength in this area requires facilities (research space in particular) to both grow the research profile and attract new personnel. The type of space required is resource intensive, with appropriate utilities, safety equipment, and instrumentation. This space may include incubation space for technology development and commercialization (with the option for entrepreneurial community to use/lease this space), or such space may be part of a separate building.

- **Creative Space.** Art faculty do not have research space on campus. East Campus provides an opportunity to increase engagement of faculty and students in the creative process with additional space. Such space could be combined with/adjacent to a “maker space”, equipped to allow fabrication and construction of new devices, components, and artistic pieces. Such space can also be made available to the public and/or utilized for outreach initiatives.
- **Multi-use Facility.** A multipurpose facility reconfigurable for films, presentations, performances, etc. would both augment facilities currently on campus as well as provide a venue for promoting East Campus activities. While there are facilities available on the Main Campus that can host some of these activities, they do not always have the resources available or access is difficult for community members. Examples include the International African Film Festival (<http://theafricanfilmfestival.org/>), which the Dedman African Studies group was recently asked to co-sponsor, and the International Film Festival (<https://www.smu.edu/Dedman/Academics/Departments/WorldLanguages/Events/Filmfestival>) hosted by the Department of World Languages.
- **Showcase.** Building on the contemplation in the report from the Task for on the Future of Libraries at SMU to combine special collections from the library, it would be valuable to have a place to house and expand such collections. Space on East Campus provides an opportunity for such a building. It could serve multiple functions by not only housing the special collections, but also having “offsite” storage for library holdings in subterranean levels. Above ground it could display special exhibitions of items/holdings in the special collections and have them open to the public (which would be easily accessible because of the location of East Campus). There could also be rotating exhibitions of **current, ongoing** work at SMU (both Main Campus and East Campus). This could showcase art work from Meadows faculty and students, new scientific discoveries, technology developed in the East Campus incubation space or maker space, etc. Making this space open to the public would allow for a direct connection between the creativity and scholarship at SMU and the public at large. It would also provide a venue for the SMU community at large to appreciate the work of their colleagues and inspire new collaborations.

There should be plenty of space on East Campus for this quad layout, but the space must be planned and utilized wisely. Part of this should be to prototype the widest possible range of mixed-use in the extant buildings before demolition. Though extant buildings may need to remain at only 49% capacity in the interim, opportunities to diversify the current uses should be taken when they arise. When new development is ultimately pursued, the buildings could be designed and decorated to emphasize the connected and collaborative nature of the campus, characteristic of the cosmopolitan nature of Dallas itself.