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## UA's master plan updated with Bryce repurposing

### University considers turning hospital into arts center

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The University of Alabama is considering transforming the main building on the Bryce Hospital campus into a cultural arts center, including space for museums and the performing arts, according to the latest draft of the 2012 campus master plan.



Staff photo | Michelle Lepianka Carter

The main building at Bryce Hospital is seen on Friday. The University of Alabama's revised master plan includes a potential renovation to the main building into a cultural arts center, which would include space for museums and performing arts.

Every five years, the university either updates or replaces its campus master plan. In 2007 a new comprehensive master plan was built, but for 2012, university planner and designer Dan Wolfe said the plan is simply being updated.

Work on the update began in January and while many of the concepts in the upcoming version are already in the works, the Bryce addition, along with a new aquatic center and new parking deck, were new announcements during an opportunity last week that UA gave students, faculty and staff to view the current draft and make suggestions.

Wolfe said with the Bryce building, restoration and preserving the historical significance of the site is the main goal.

"But we also want to add a state of the art performing arts center through an addition on the back and make it more of a cultural center for the university with museums," Wolfe said. "It would be a great space for concerts and plays and all kinds of things, and really, it's a space the university doesn't have yet."

When asked what the museums in the new space would focus on, Wolfe said one could be dedicated to art and could possibly allow the university to host its Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art on campus once again. The gallery moved downtown earlier this year.

But Wolfe also said there is a desire to tell the story of the history of UA's relationship with Bryce and how the two campuses grew alongside one another.

"We've got so many documents in the Hoole Special Collections on this subject that are kind of hidden away," he said. "They're catalogued, but they're not really displayed in a way so you can get a real sense of the whole thing."

Wolfe said the university is also considering building a new residence hall and additional parking in the additional 168 acres that the Bryce property affords.

"We're very excited, and these are things that we've been very excited about for a very long time, but we never were able to actually begin planning them because we didn't own the property," he said.



"But we want to make sure we get it right. I think our goal is to go slow and try to not rush in there and see how much density we can build into it. Instead, we want to just wait and see what is needed."

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Wolfe said the Bryce concept and the rest of the current draft of the plan has been greatly informed by an online survey that generated 1,800 responses.

"The survey was composed of five open-ended questions, too, and the people taking it actually wrote out their responses," Wolfe said. "We reviewed those to get feedback from interested constituents and began formulating these concepts based on what we heard."

Wolfe said that survey is open and the university is still interested in hearing the public's thoughts on the plan. The survey can be accessed at [uafacilities.ua.edu](http://uafacilities.ua.edu). Scroll down and click the "University Planning" link and then click the "online survey" link.

He said the new plan reflects the unprecedented growth UA is experiencing. The university once again reported a record-breaking enrollment total of 31,747 students for the fall 2011 semester.

The total is 62 percent above the fall 2002 enrollment, the year before current UA President Robert E. Witt arrived.

The plan will be presented to UA's board of trustees for final approval by the middle of 2012, Wolfe said.

Wolfe said the new aquatics center would likely be built near the student recreation center on Fifth Avenue.

"The question was if it's more cost effective to build a new facility. We hired a consultant who worked through that issue a few years back and the conclusion was to build a brand new facility," he said.

The current aquatic center, located at the corner of Hackberry Lane and Paul W. Bryant Drive, would be demolished and a new parking deck would be built there.

"We definitely need parking in that area because of Coleman Coliseum, Foster Auditorium and the core of campus being so close by," he said. "We could also put some retail shops down on the first floor so it wouldn't just look like a big parking garage."

Projects already in the works that are part of the updated plan include relocating UA's Fresh Food dining hall, additions to Gorgas Library and the Ferguson Student Center, an indoor tennis complex and a new dormitory on the north side of campus complete with an additional new dining hall and a new student recreation center.

Earlier this month, UA trustees approved the construction of the new \$15 million Fresh Food dining hall on Hackberry Lane, south of the science and engineering complex.

Wolfe said the Fresh Food relocation has been in the conversation for several years.

"We're just overcrowded in the Ferguson Center location, so the plan is move Fresh Food to its own facility and expand the fast food options at the Ferguson Center back where Fresh Food currently is," he said.

Wolfe said the new Fresh Food location would be located where the historic Kilgore House currently sits on Hackberry Lane. He said the house would be relocated.

"That's just a very accessible place for the new dining hall," he said.

In September, trustees approved a \$27.5 million project that will add nearly 60,000

square feet onto the south end of the Ferguson Center, while renovating 99,000 square feet.

The University Supply Store is benefiting greatly from the project and will receive nearly 50,000 square feet of the addition and renovated space.

During that same meeting they also approved a 50,000-square-foot addition to the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library that will double the library's seating capacity to 2,278. The addition includes two new basement floors and will be built onto the 1967 addition to the building, which faces north on Capstone Drive.

The library's columned main entrance faces the Quad, but the addition will give Capstone Drive entrance a new, more attractive facade, transforming it into an academic plaza.

In June 2010, trustees approved the construction of the \$66 million Phase 1 of North Bluff Residential community on the bluff overlooking the Black Warrior River between Rose Towers and Old Hackberry Lane.

Phase 1 of the project is under construction and the dormitory is expected to open in fall 2012.

Phase 2 is budgeted at \$63.5 million and will be partially built on the current footprint of Rose Towers, a 13-story, 750-bed residence hall built in 1969.

Trustees approved the demolition of Rose Towers as part of the university's construction plan for 2011-12.

The residence hall will be demolished in 2012 at a cost of \$2.5 million, said Mike Lanier, UA's project manager for construction.

The university also plans to build a recreation center and dining hall between the two North Bluff dormitories. The north campus recreation center is estimated to cost \$17 million and is planned to have all the amenities of a modern gym except a pool. Officials predict a new center would relieve crowds at the current Student Recreation Center on the east side of campus and the weight room in the Aquatic Center on the north side of campus.

The north campus dining hall is anticipated to cost \$7 million and seat 250 people.

In November 2010, trustees approved the construction of a \$6 million indoor tennis stadium with what officials at the time called a "critical project completion date of fall 2011."

The indoor tennis facility will house six NCAA regulation courts and will be adjacent to the outdoor tennis facility on Fifth Avenue near the softball complex.