UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FORT SMITH
2024 CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

POLK
STANLEY
WILCOX

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OVERVIEW

Navigating the Future of UAFS Campus

The 2023 Campus Masterplan Study for the University of Arkansas Fort Smith represents a comprehensive planning exercise by the Design team, University staff, and various stakeholders. Its goal is to examine the current Campus needs and Advancements with regard to the guiding principals established in the 2013 Masterplan Study.

Through this study, we will evaluate the validity of the 5 primary previous recommendations given the passage of time, document the progress visible to date, and recommend future campus evolutions that speak to the current state of the campus.
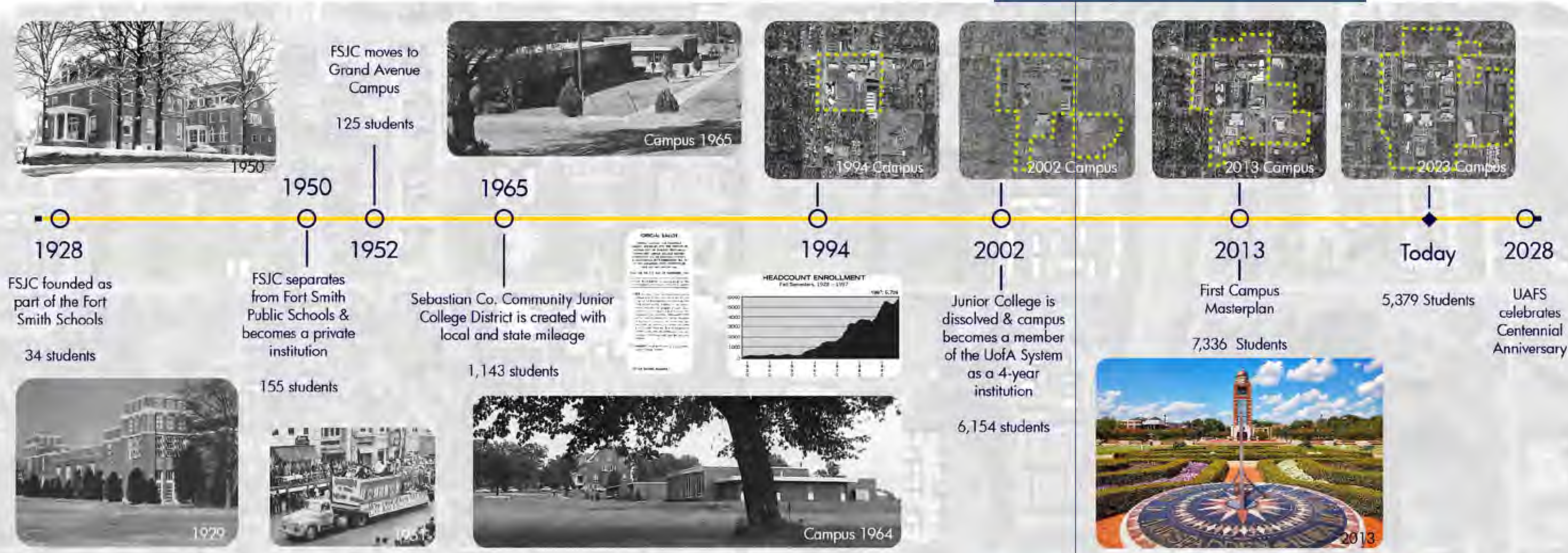

Enhancing UAFS Campus for a Connected Fort Smith

The UAFS Campus sits at the Intersection of Grand Avenue and N Waldron Road. With Grand Avenue serving as the University's primary link to the Expressway and Downtown Fort Smith, it serves as the main vehicular artery for the campus. N Waldron Road also fields significant traffic from the surrounding city areas and provides a vital vehicular path to and through the city neighborhoods for access to retail and medical center along Rogers Avenue. These two streets were once the defining boundaries of the campus, however campus growth to the East and North threaten to push these busy thoroughfare's further into the campus creating complexities for campus movement across them. Care should be taken to evaluate opportunities to slow the traffic at critical points that provide for safer migration for students.

UAFS HISTORY

1950

FSJC moves to Grand Avenue Campus

125 students

Campus 1965

1994 Campus

2002 Campus

2013 Campus

2023 Campus

1928 — **1950** — **1952** — **1965** — **1994** — **2002** — **2013** — **Today** — **2028**

1928
FSJC founded as part of the Fort Smith Schools

34 students

1929

1950
FSJC separates from Fort Smith Public Schools & becomes a private institution

155 students

1952

1951

1965
Sebastian Co. Community Junior College District is created with local and state mileage

1,143 students

Campus 1964

HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT

1994

2002
Junior College is dissolved & campus becomes a member of the UofA System as a 4-year institution

6,154 students

2013
First Campus Masterplan

7,336 Students

2013

Today
5,379 Students

2028
UAFS celebrates Centennial Anniversary

MASTERPLAN GOALS
Designing for your goals and priorities

1. Extend Campus Green

2. Push Parking to Perimeter

3. Enhance Pedestrian Experience

4. Provide a Visible Campus Identity

5. Provide Safe Pedestrian Crossings at Grand and N Waldron

6. Define Campus Edge Through Building Placement

7. Prioritize Centers for Excellence

EXTEND CAMPUS GREEN

The current Campus Central lawn serves as an iconic and vibrant heart of the Campus; however, growth at the North and south sections of Campus do not embody the same character as the central zone due to vehicular impediments such as interior parking lots and former roadways. Extending the campus green is essential for enhancing the university's aesthetic appeal and environmental sustainability, creating a more attractive and eco-friendly campus. Moreover, expanded green spaces encourage outdoor activities and foster social interaction, enriching the overall campus experience.

PEDESTRIAN PROMENADE

BOTANICAL GARDENS

EVENT LAWN

SHADED WALKWAYS

SHADED GREEN WALKWAYS
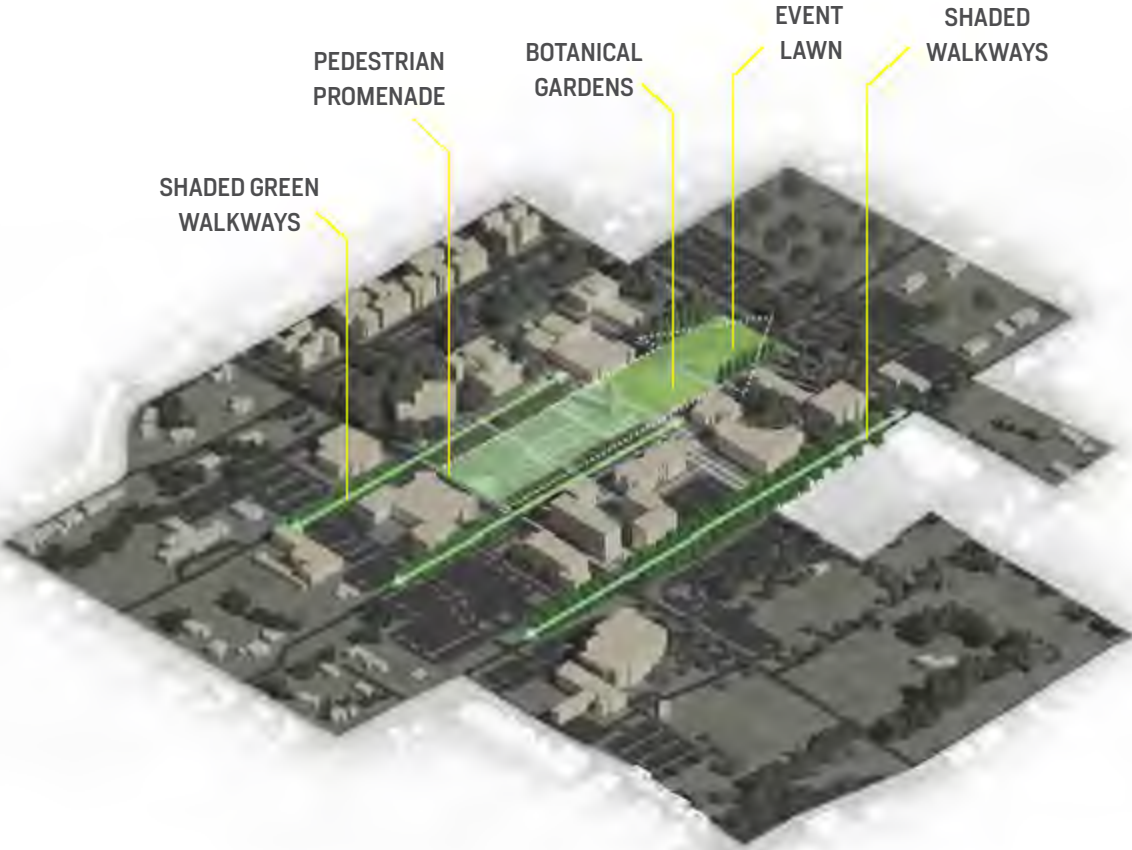
PUSH PARKING TO PERIMETER

Interior isolated parking lots currently restrict the ability to create a unified and safe pedestrian experience by forcing frequent vehicular and pedestrian interaction. Interior lots also absorb vast amount of land that could be dedicated to Campus program needs and pedestrian walkways or gathering spaces. Pushing parking to the perimeter of the campus reduces traffic congestion and enhances pedestrian safety within the core areas, creating a more walkable and pleasant environment for students and staff. This approach also allows for more green spaces and recreational areas, fostering a more sustainable and aesthetically pleasing campus landscape.
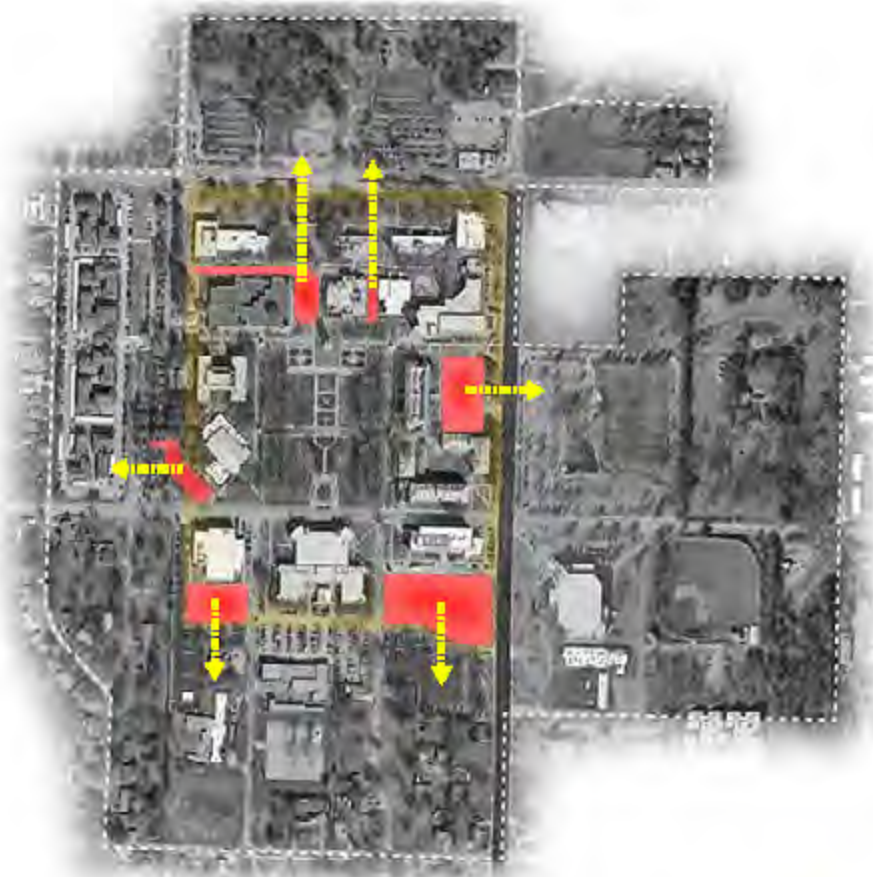
ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

Enhancing the pedestrian experience on campus promotes a safer and more engaging environment, encouraging walking and reducing reliance on vehicles. This fosters a stronger sense of community and interaction among students and staff, contributing to their overall well-being and academic success.
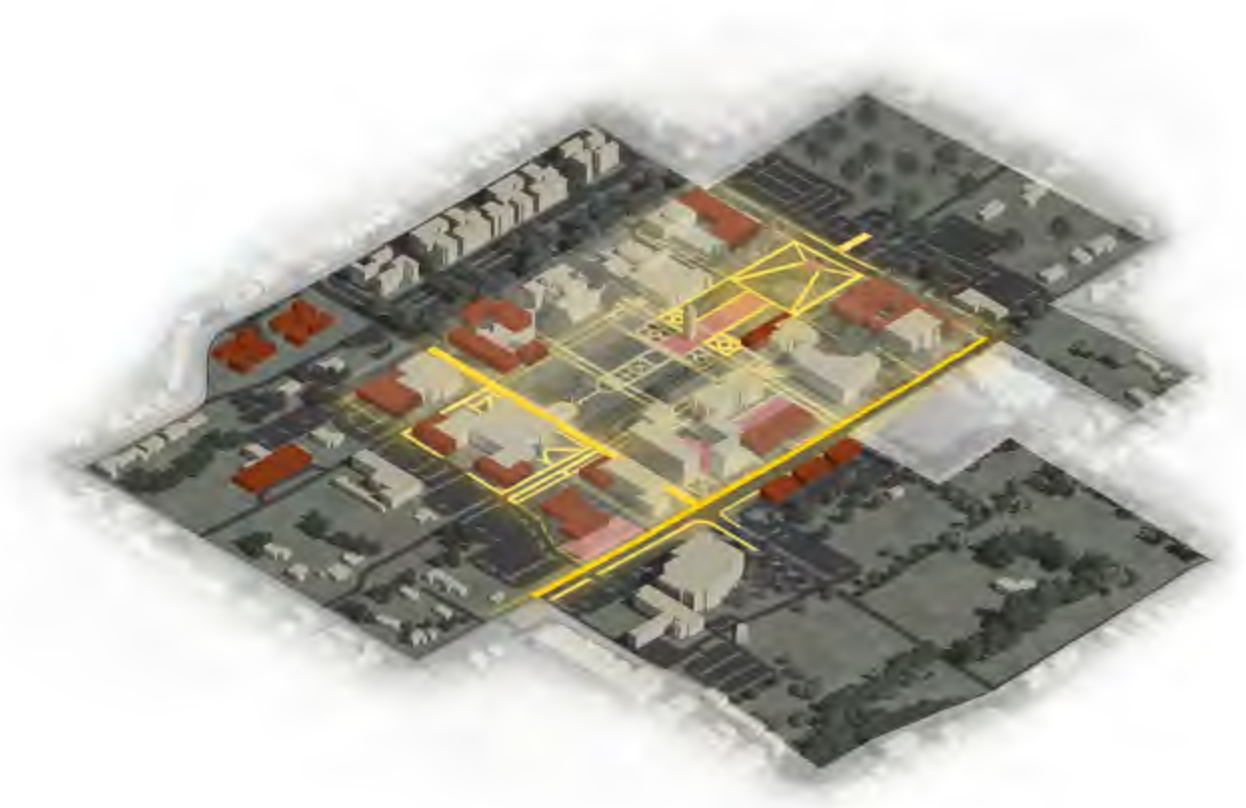
PROVIDE VISIBLE CAMPUS IDENTITY

Creating a visible campus identity is crucial for place-making, as it strengthens community ties and fosters a sense of belonging among students and staff. It also helps distinguish the institution, making it more attractive to prospective students and visitors by reflecting its unique values and mission. Well placed campus identifiers also signal to non-campus members a sense of campus arrival that signals the need for heightened vigilance regarding traffic speed and potential pedestrian interactions.

POINTS FOR
CAMPUS SIGNAGE
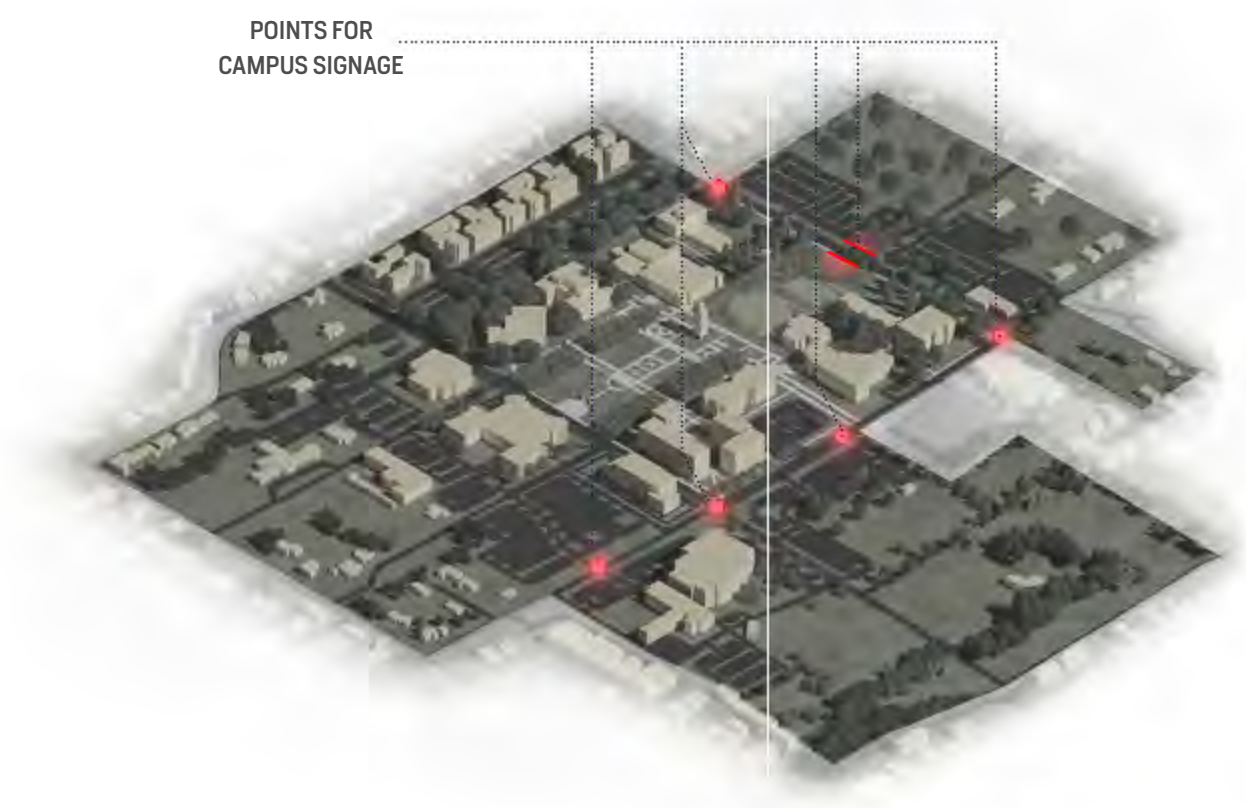
PROVIDE SAFE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS AT GRAND AND N WALDRON

It's important to provide safe pedestrian crossings at Grand Avenue and N Waldron Road because Grand Avenue is one of the busiest vehicular traffic paths, posing a high risk to pedestrians. Additionally, N Waldron Road is a five-lane street, making it challenging for pedestrians to cross safely without designated crossings. Ensuring a safe pedestrian campus enhances accessibility and encourages walking, which promotes a healthier and more sustainable community.

POINTS OF PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICLE TRAFFIC INTERSECTIONS
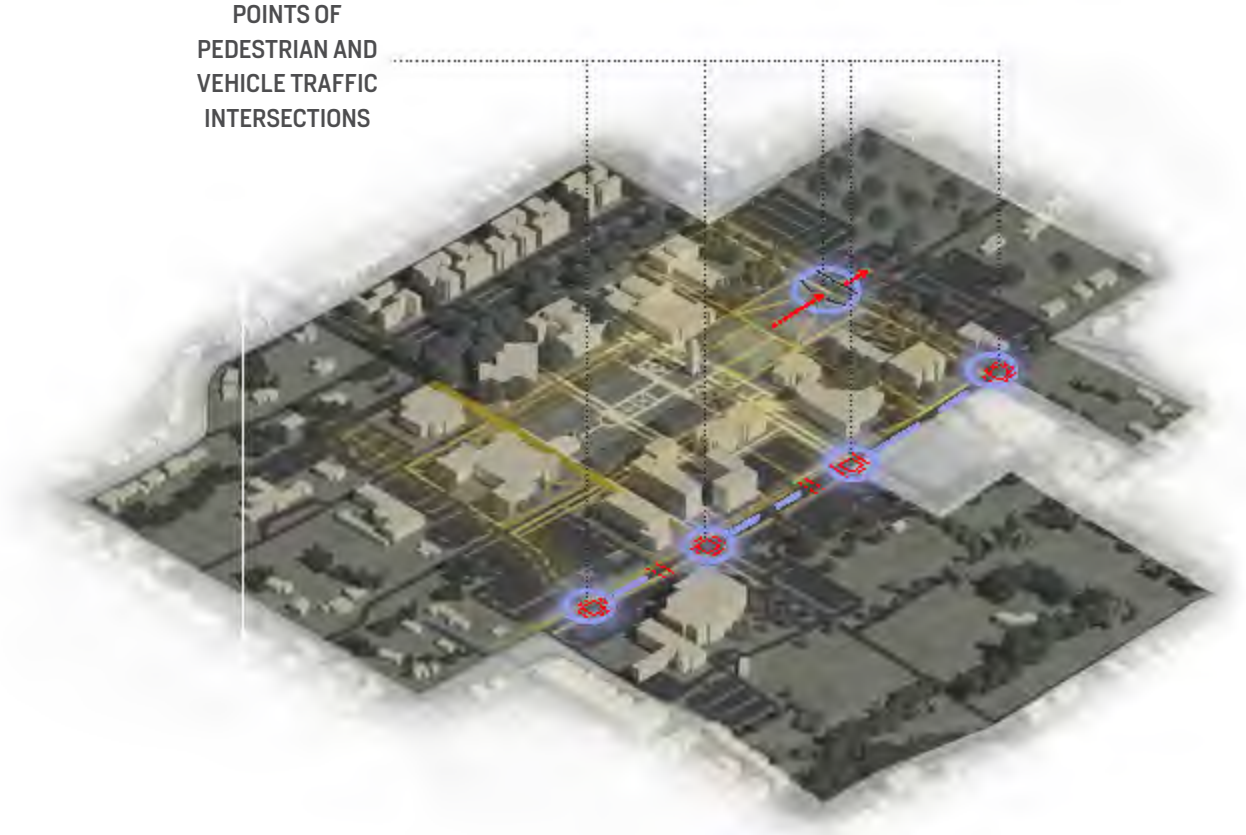
DEFINE CAMPUS EDGE THROUGH BUILDING PLACEMENT

Defining a campus edge through building placement is crucial for establishing a clear campus identity and sense of place. This strategic placement of buildings enhances the visual coherence and aesthetic appeal of the campus, fostering a distinctive and memorable university environment and reinforcing the sense of arrival. Infilling the boundaries also encourages campus building density that leads to a more walkable campus and a more sustainable landscape.
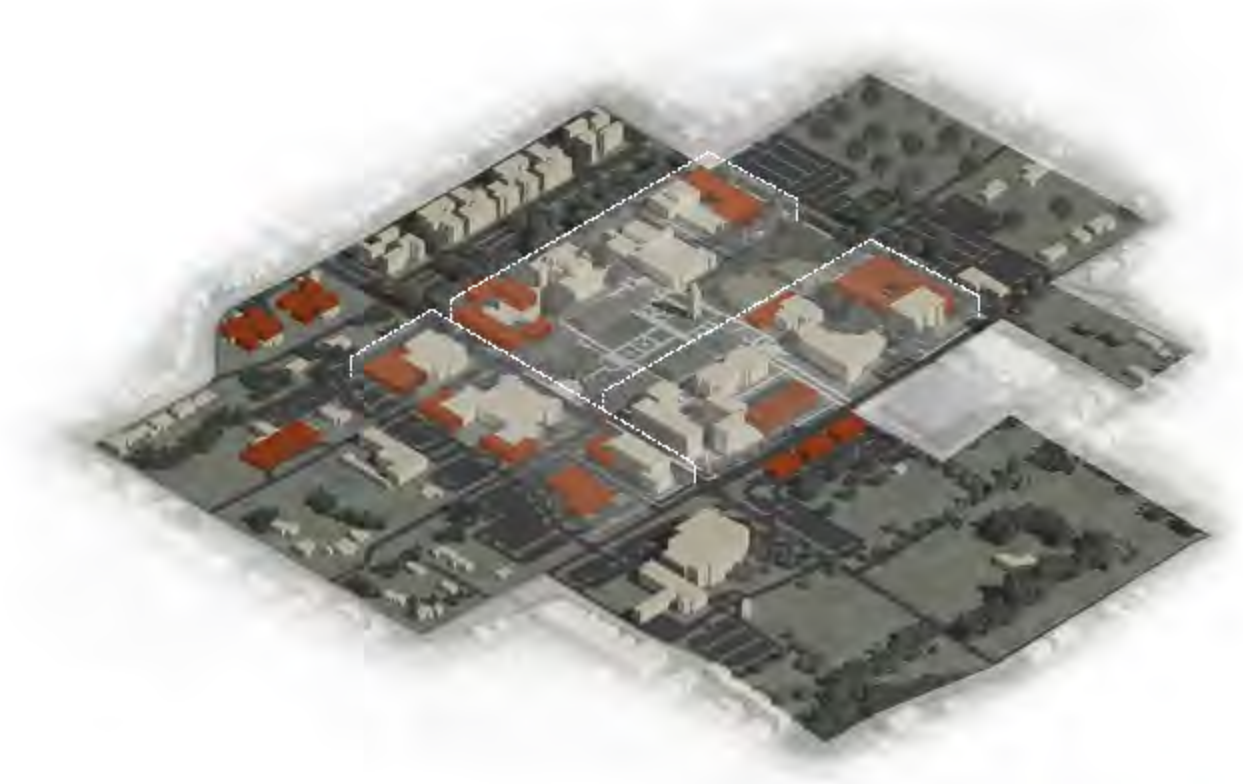
PRIORITIZE CENTERS FOR EXCELLENCE

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

- Allow space for possible expansion / renovations as need arises due to program growth

HEALTHCARE

CREATE PEDERGRAFT ANNEX

- Additional sqaure feet to accommodate program growth
- Use Structure to facilitate pedestrian movement across N Waldron Road
- Create campus facade & gateway at N Waldron Road

ARTS

NEW PERFORMING ARTS VENUE

- Performing Arts fixed seat theater
- Student and community Practice Facility
- Student and community meeting spaces
- Encourage community engagement by hosting ticketed events on campus
- Relocation of theater allows for the removal of Ballman–Speer to allow Campus Green expansion

DATA SCIENCE

- Currently the Data Science program is spread throughout multiple locations across the Campus
- Consider co-locating program courses in one area of campus to create a visible and discernible Program Identify and share resources

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

DATA SCIENCE

ARTS

HEALTHCARE
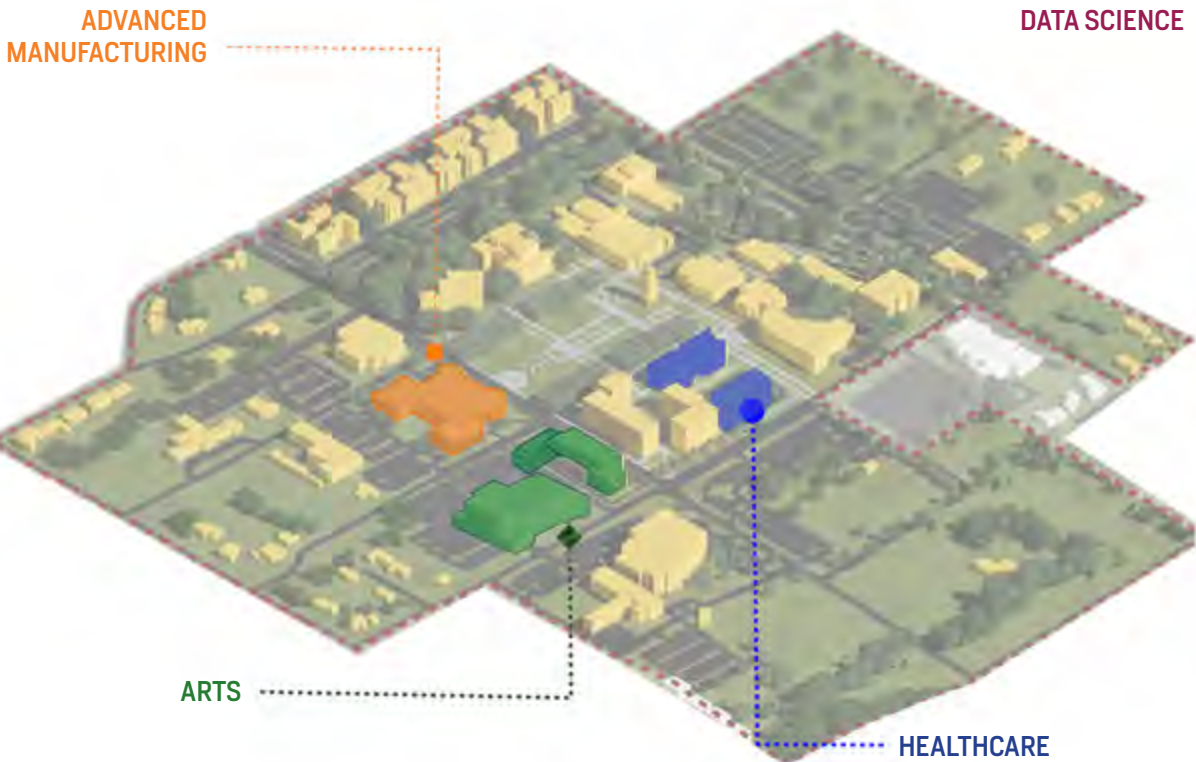
CAMPUS FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

EXISTING BUILDING DEMOLITION (assumes this is phased over time in order of listing)
1. 51 ANNEX
2. GYMNASIUM
3. BALLMAN
4. VINES
5. BREEDLOVE FINE ARTS
   (Most costly to remove/replace and the building with longest remaining lifespan – current growth should accommodate it remaining until program needs and replacement opportunities arise)

EXISTING BUILDING RENO/ADD
6. FULLERTON – Potential Facade Renovation
7. WINDGATE – Addition currently Underway
8. FLANDERS – Addition and New Building Envelope
9. GARDNER – Addition and New Building Envelope
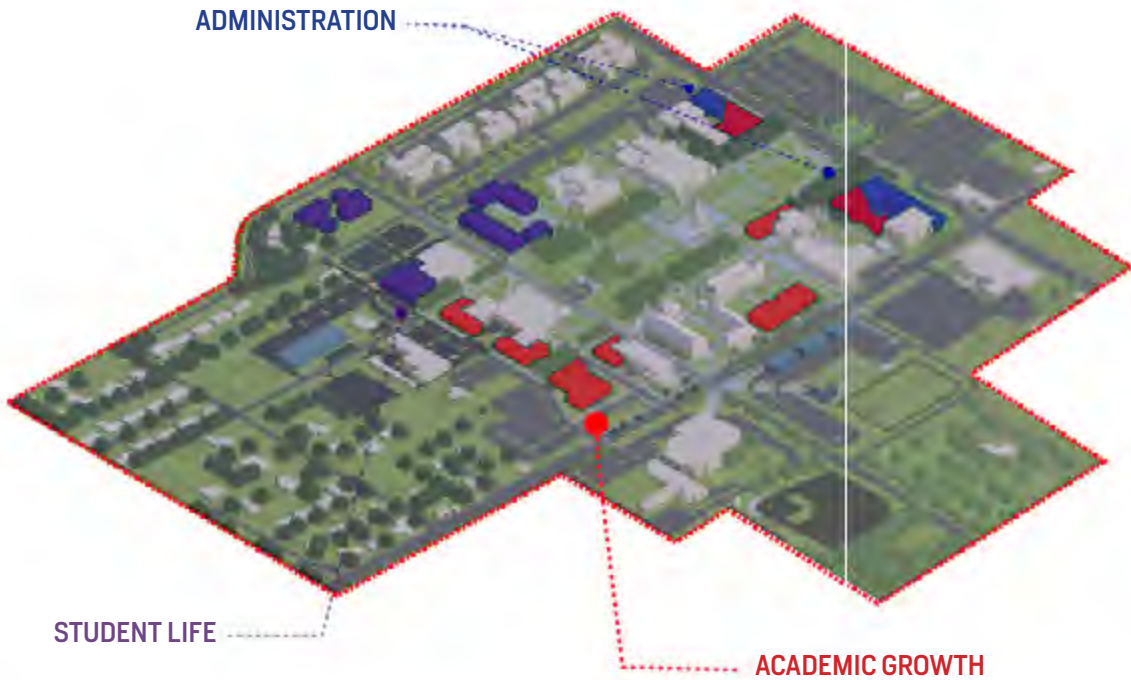10. VINES – Depending on Facility Assessment could remain w/Renovation of Envelope

■ EXISTING BUILDING DEMOLITION

■ EXISTING BUILDING RENO/ADD

CAMPUS FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

ADMINISTRATION

STUDENT LIFE

ACADEMIC GROWTH

HOUSING/STUDENT SUPPORT

Expand Housing Beds

- Continue apartment style housing south
- Mirror dorm style housing / support across camps lawn
- Infill campus store amenities to support campus living
- Supplement residential parking
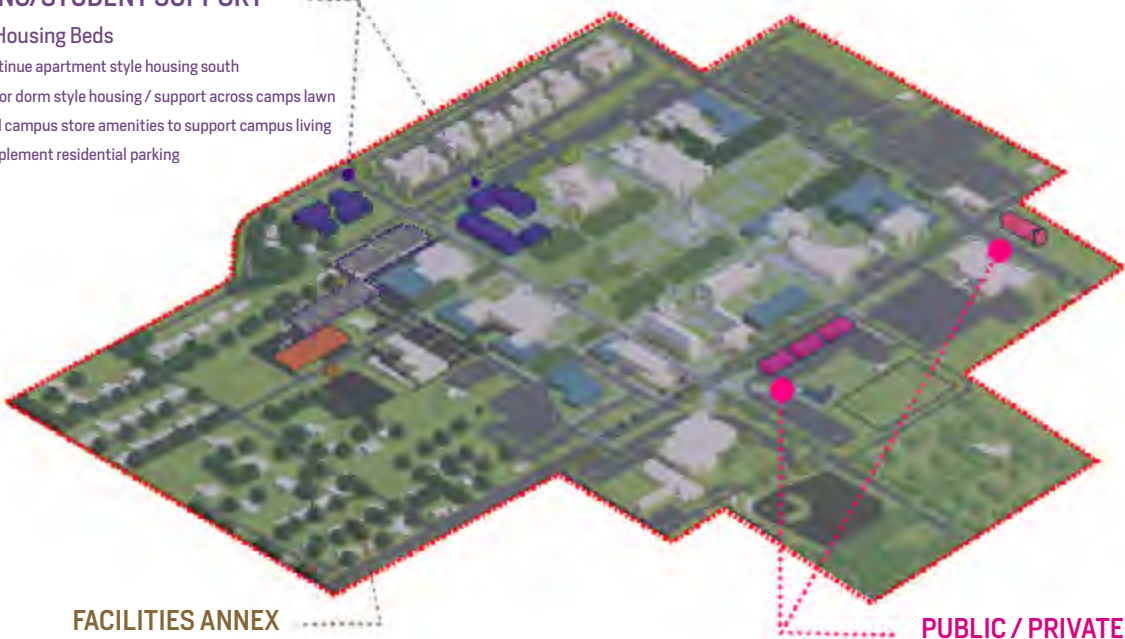
FACILITIES ANNEX

Build New Campus Resources Facility

- Campus receiving / shipping
- Campus facilities storage
- Campus police / parking

PUBLIC / PRIVATE

Create Private Retail Opportunities

- Addition of student support spaces
- Coffee shops
- Restaurants/Grab N Go / convenience store
- Book stores / academic supplies
- Gaming / lounge venues
- Computer lab lounge

PROPOSED CAMPUS INFILL

Responding to site influences with functional design

SITE INFLUENCES

From the days of Westark College, which was primarily a commuter college, to the thriving University of today, the most dominant site influences have been N Waldron Road and Grand Avenue with their heavy city traffic and strong border that has always defined the campus edge. Currently some of the oldest buildings on campus line Grand Avenue; and while they identify the campus, they also block view into the heart of the campus. Grand Avenue also separates the large parking zone to the north of campus, creating a more dangerous pedestrian experience as the campus grew. Replacement, removal, or reinvention of existing buildings, and establishing a more consistent architectural language along Grand Avenue will help define campus as "place". Strategic Removal of older/outdated building facilities will allow the expansion of the campus green to Grand Avenue and allow a true visual town–to–gown experience for the thousands of cars that pass each day.

SITE ZONING

Organizing the site began by identifying "zones" for buildings, campus greens, athletics and parking, which were a response to various influences on the site. Existing buildings and programs should grow in place, such as arts, health sciences, and advanced manufacturing in a way that enhances the campus edges and reorganizes parking to create campus entries along established and expanded tree alleys. Public/private developments should be encouraged along N Waldron to slow traffic and establish amenities for students, such as retail and restaurants between the academic campus and athletics to the east. Campus housing can continue to grow on the west with apartments and dormitory living.

EXISTING

INFILL

GRAND AVENUE

Designing adjacencies between the spaces (indoor and outdoor) and designing for flexibility and growth are key to the enhancement of the campus. Understanding pedestrian patterns – how students naturally move– can help establish the design language for outdoor plazas and lawns. Paths from parking onto campus become primary pedestrian feeders, and safely navigating a major avenue's traffic is one of any campuses' greatest challenge. The safest way to get from one side of the street to the other is to NOT cross the street, but walk under or over. Grand Avenue presently has a small tunnel, but working with the city, this underpass could be reimagined to become a true gateway to campus. The expansion of the student lawn to Grand Avenue also creates a sloped space for campus events and provides a visible connection to the heart and activity of the campus from Grand Avenue. New campus building placements that line Grand Avenue would make admissions easily accessible for those traveling by car and needing adjacent parking and expose them to the campus via new more ceremonial approach and view into the campus.
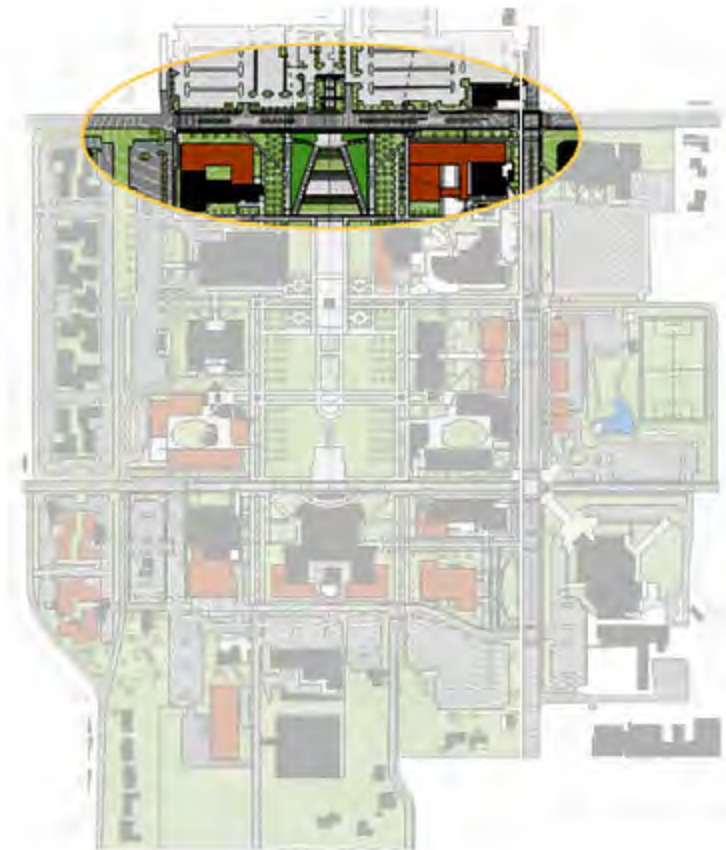
CRITICAL STEPS TO REIMAGINE GRAND AVENUE

- Re-envision the Grand Avenue tunnel to signify a sense of arrival – a safe and attractive gateway to the campus

- Celebrate the pedestrian crossing as a moment of arrival at the campus

- Create convenient and ADA Accessible paths for all students and visitors via a safe and appealing pathway

- Develop functional/programmable exterior spaces adjacent to the arrival point that encourage student gathering but also provide visibility into the vibrant heart of the campus.

- Design public open space to provide intuitive wayfinding by increasing visibility to core campus elements.

Create a sense of arrival

Visibility to core campus elements and amenities

Function/Programmable Space for Campus activities

N. WALDRON ROAD

North Waldron Road is currently a 4 lane city roadway with a continuous turn lane. As a main artery to the city's neighborhoods and retail areas, it supports a heavy traffic load often at speeds unsafe for pedestrian crossing. While once serving as a campus boundary, it now bisects a section of the campus growth that hosts athletic facilities and parking. The current configuration of this roadway provides the greatest current challenge to Campus pedestrian safety. As campus growth continues across N Waldron, steps should be taken to slow traffic, provide safe crossing options for pedestrians, and take advantage of the "town-to-gown" opportunity created at this intersection of campus and city. With strategic street planting infill, street side parking , and private/public retail partnerships , this street design has the potential to convert a once unsafe roadway to a vibrant campus/community hub where both City and Student Life can thrive. Its geography also provides great foot and car traffic to support retail while creating a sense of place and arrival for the campus.

CRITICAL STEPS TO REINVENT N WALDRON ROAD

- Engage opportunities to provide segregated pedestrian crossings that also function as aesthetically pleasing gateways for the campus and define a sense of place for the City.

- Seize efficiencies of vertical circulation already required in adjacent buildings to help make bridge connections more financially achievable.

- Search out Private Partners for the development of mutually beneficial retail services

- Use retail storefronts at the ground level to obscure large parking zones behind and provide a pedestrian dominated streetfront.

- Celebrate pedestrian crossings with changes in surface materials and planting that alert drivers to potential pedestrian hazards.

- Use tree planting and landscaping to soften the streetscape for the pedestrian, but also to provide passive cooling for the immediate area and the city at large thereby creating a more sustainable and cooler world.

Pedestrian accessed retail as both parking screen and place maker

Resourceful design can bring together cars, people, safety and community

KINKEAD AVENUE

Formerly a vehicular roadway now closed to thru traffic with temporary roadway barricades, Kinkead Avenue currently operates neither truly successfully for the car or pedestrian. While it is desired to eliminate car traffic at the interior of campus, the service access for multiple buildings along Kinkead as well as safety and fire access necessitate the requirement that this area remain accessible for service/emergency vehicles and for designated student times.

DISCRETELY CONTROL CAR ACCESS FROM ADJACENT STREET TO PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN PLAZA

- Currently the continuation of paving from Grand Avenue does nothing to distinguish this as a transition to pedestrian space. Permanent but operable bollards should be installed at the entry to Kinkead to prevent the casual driver but allow emergency and service when needed.

- Reduce scale of driveable service by introducing paving and planting materials for the human scale and environmental comfort

- The roadway should be modified with textured/colored paving that breaks down the otherwise large paving area into smaller pedestrian plaza zones intermixed with planting and trees, and defined zones for both people and cars when needed.

- Change a divider into a connector

- Create spaces and opportunities for campus gatherings on roadway plaza while visually extending the campus lawn and tree alley to growth on the south end of campus

BALDOR

EXISTING

PROPOSED

EXISTING

PROPOSED