Brown University Institutional Master Plan – Amendment #2

submitted May 20, 2014
“The mission of Brown University is to serve the community, the nation, and the world by discovering, communicating, and preserving knowledge and understanding in a spirit of free inquiry, and by educating and preparing students to discharge the offices of life with usefulness and reputation. We do this through a partnership of students and teachers in a unified community known as a university-college.”
On October 27, 2012, Brown inaugurated Christina Paxson as its 19th President. With this came a renewed focus on Brown’s mission and its goals for the future. This was especially appropriate as the University celebrates its 250th anniversary, reminding all of us how far-reaching the direction we set truly is.

In response, the University initiated a number of planning efforts intended to guide us over the next decade. While none of these efforts signal a significant shift in direction, they provide a more clear vision of Brown in the decades to come. This amendment is intended to capture these plans and facilitate collaboration with the City and our neighbors.

The pages that follow include brief descriptions of the University’s new strategic plan, Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown, and its corresponding physical framework, Handbook for Physical Planning. They also describe three initiatives that flow directly out of these plans, transforming parts of both College Hill and the Jewelry District:

1. Expansion of the School of Engineering
2. Rehabilitation of South Street Power Station
3. Reinvestment in the Thayer Street area

All of these initiatives are multi-pronged efforts with several related pieces. As such they require careful planning and coordination, so their execution can have the desired overall effect. This amendment is intended to supplement the information included in the 2011 Institutional Master Plan and enable us to move forward with these initiatives.

Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown

In October 2013, the Brown Corporation approved Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown. This strategic plan offers the broad vision and goals to ensure Brown’s capacity to fulfill its mission of teaching, research and service at the highest levels. The plan builds on the core values of intellectual independence, creativity, collaborations, and social purpose to achieve greater levels of academic distinction - uniting innovative education and outstanding research to benefit the community, the nation, and the world. The document reinforces the University’s commitment to four key areas: Integrative Scholarship, Educational Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Campus Development that supports Brown’s aspirations. A full version can be found at:


Handbook for Physical Planning

A new framework plan that corresponds with the vision outlined in the strategic plan was also created in 2013. The plan builds on the Strategic Framework for Physical Planning at Brown developed in 2003, but with a new focus on the campus as a physical analog to Brown’s open curriculum. Based on this idea, six planning principles were developed to help direct the campus development:

1. Prioritize academic uses on College Hill
2. Celebrate the Brown scale
3. Energize the core with a mixture of uses
4. Engage Thayer Street
5. Connect the campus

Contributions to the City

In 2003, Brown University along with the other educational institutions reached an agreement with the City of Providence to make voluntary contributions to the City and to make transition payments over 15 years on any properties that are acquired and converted to educational use. Then in 2012, Brown forged an additional agreement with the City that dramatically increased its financial support. Today total annual tax payments and voluntary contributions are over $8 million per year.

While this support is important, the most valuable role for the University to play is contributing to the
economic vitality of the city and state and to be a productive partner – providing both direct and indirect employment, attracting research funding and capital investment, and spawning new commercial ventures. A recent Appleseed report demonstrates the annual economic value Brown University provides to the State, including:

- $725 million of economic output, including direct University jobs, employment by contractors and vendors, spending by students and visitors, and a multiplier effect.
- $179 million of federal research spending
- $159 million of goods and services (including construction) from Rhode Island companies
- 98 patent applications filed for new technologies developed at Brown.

The goal is to build on this success and serve as an effective catalyst for economic growth. Both the new strategic plan and the framework plan for the campus make this objective very clear. The full Appleseed report can be found at:

http://brown.edu/about/reports/economic-impact/

Community Input

At Brown, it is a strongly held belief that an open and collaborative process helps ensure the best outcome. The development of this amendment is no exception. Brown has worked closely with local stakeholders and is committed to continuing community input throughout the implementation of the plan. For this amendment, Brown delivered over 250 letters, posted the draft online, and held the following meetings. While unanimity is difficult to achieve, the amendment clearly benefitted from this input.

- 2/28/14 Community Working Group
- 2/24/14 Representative Edie Ajello
- 2/28/14 Senator Gayle Goldin
- 2/26/14 City Council members
- 3/5/14 PPS – Planning & Architecture Review
- 3/7/14 Planning Department Staff
- 3/7/14 Neighbors of the School of Engineering
- 3/12/14 Neighbors of the School of Engineering
- 5/2/14 Community Working Group
- 5/13/14 Open Community Forum
- 5/14/14 Open Community Forum
- 5/20/14 Planning Department Staff
- 6/17/14 City Plan Commission

Property Holdings

Brown University is an institution with roughly 6,200 undergraduates, 1,500 graduate and medical students, and 4,200 employees. It currently owns 226 buildings primarily in College Hill and the Jewelry District. Recent changes in property holdings reflect the planning principles in the Handbook for Physical Planning, including both the sale of underutilized properties primarily as part of the Brown to Brown Home Ownership Program and acquisition in key locations:

- Sale of 38 Taft Avenue Day Care
- Sale of 95 Brown Street (Brown to Brown)
- Sale of 93 Brown Street (Brown to Brown)
- Sale of 109 Brown Street (Brown to Brown)
- Acquisition of 271 Thayer Street (City Sports)
- Sale of 134 Hope Street (Brown to Brown)
- Sale of 240 Bowen Street

Parking & Transportation Plan

Brown employs an extensive set of demand management measures in its effort to reduce parking demand, including: RIPTA UPass, ZipCar, Brown University Shuttles, RISD Rides, carpooling, guaranteed ride home, increasing parking fees, and very limited student parking. Usage numbers for these programs continue to grow, so Brown is building on this success and exploring a pilot Bike Share program that would tie into a citywide network.

For those who drive, the University provides 2774 parking spaces in over 100 separate lots, including the recently acquired portions of Olive, Benevolent, and Brown Streets. In addition, Brown has licensed 250 spaces on city streets near the campus for its exclusive use from 8:00-12:00. This allows Brown to charge for the use of on-street parking spaces while the City collects the revenues from violations.

Brown’s off-street parking requirement is a calculation based on the number of people on campus. The table below illustrates the calculation for the current year and for the next five years. The projected 2019 numbers include growth in students and employees, and future parking garages in the athletic complex and near the South Street Power Station. Licensed on-street spaces are not included.

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School of Engineering Expansion

The third oldest civilian engineering program in the country and the oldest in the Ivy League, officially made the transition to a School of Engineering in 2011. Focusing on key strategic areas, including Biology and Health Care, Energy and the Environment, Information Technology for the Future, and Entrepreneurial Innovation, the newly created school can broaden its reach and impact. To accomplish these goals, the school has a plan for 30% growth in the faculty and more advanced research space.

After carefully analyzing whether this growth should occur on College Hill or in the Jewelry District (documented in the Handbook for Physical Planning), the University is planning to construct a new building adjacent to the existing home of Engineering - Barus & Holley/Prince Lab. This new building will house research space, clean rooms, faculty offices, and support space in approximately 80,000 gsf. There will be a direct connection to the existing complex, but the footprint and the height will be limited to reduce its perceived mass. The building will be four stories tall with a minimal rooftop penthouse.

The project also includes the creation of a major new open space at the end of the primary east / west axis of the campus, creating a gathering space for the students and faculty and providing capacity to reduce the storm water run-off. A conceptual site plan is show at the right.

Building such a significant project on College Hill requires extensive enabling work. The site is in the core of the campus, but it is currently occupied by four houses, all owned by Brown and used for academic purposes. Two of the houses are occupied by the Division of Applied
Math, which is headquartered in the adjacent 182 George Street. To accommodate the space required to relocate Applied Math and to maintain the connection to its headquarters, a new building of approximately 13,000 gsf is planned in place of the parking lot on the corner of Hope Street and George Street. This building is intended to transition from the existing Barus & Holley complex to the residential neighborhoods on the opposite sides of both George Street and Hope Street. The parking lot will be demolished, faculty and staff parkers will be reassigned, and two large trees (in declining health) will be removed. The building site shown below is intended to identify the site rather than the footprint. It is assumed the design of the new building will occupy only a portion of the site.

With the occupants relocated, the four houses on the site of the new Engineering building will have to be demolished. The Public Archaeology Lab has already conducted historic research on the houses and has begun the appropriate documentation of each:

**37 Manning:** Designed by Prescott Clarke, later of Clarke & Howe, this house was built in 1900 in the colonial revival style likely as a speculative house. It was initially purchased by Herbert Hinkley, who owned it until his death. The house changed hands a couple of times before Brown acquired it in 1961. It has been converted to a business use, but is otherwise in good condition. Its footprint is 52’x 43’, wider than most of the surrounding street right-of-ways, making relocation very difficult.

**29 Manning:** This lot was originally owned by Herbert Hinckley as part of the 37 Manning property, but after his death it was sold to a local architect J. Peter Gedes, who designed and built a modern style house in 1938. The architect and his wife, Daniel Burnham’s daughter, occupied the house until 1967, when it was acquired by Brown. Although it has been converted to a business use, because of its size, it has limited usefulness to the University.

**341 Brook:** This house was constructed in 1900 by an unknown builder and purchased by Wallace Chandler, an executive from Standard Mill Supply. It changed hands several times before Brown acquired it in 1967. It has not been fully converted to a business use, so significant code upgrades would be required to reuse the space as an academic office space.

**333 Brook:** This house was constructed in 1900 by Howland Wood for his parents. It changed hands a few times before becoming the Sweeney School of Shorthand from 1938-1965. Brown acquired the property in 1986 and converted it to a business use for academic offices. Again the footprint (40’x42”) exceeds most of the surrounding street right-of-ways.
Rehabilitation of South Street Power Station

Since the South Street Power Station ceased operation, several attempts have been made to reuse this magnificent historic structure. In an effort to revitalize the entire area, Brown is partnering with Commonwealth Ventures, LLC, the University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College to rehabilitate the historic building and adjacent parcels, bringing both residents and professionals into the Jewelry District.

The rehabilitation of the historic power plant building will be divided equally between the URI/RIC Nursing Education Center and administrative offices for Brown. Two floors will be added to the top and new entrances off Eddy Street and Point Street will be created. The overall development also includes new housing and retail at Davol Square and a new parking garage. See conceptual site plan at right.

Brown’s role is in the project is simply committing to a long term lease of roughly 135,000 sf within the historic power station, but it is a good example of the University’s ability to serve as a catalyst for projects of this magnitude. The space will be used to consolidate most of the administrative functions of the University, many of which will be moving from College Hill to the Jewelry District. With an estimated influx of approximately 300 Brown employees – plus URI/RIC’s Nursing Education Center – the project will also benefit the surrounding neighborhood, providing a new economic vitality.
Thayer Street Improvements

In January 2013 the City initiated a planning study (funded by Brown) to produce an urban design concept for the Thayer Street area based on a comprehensive analysis of the area’s character, the market conditions and potential, and the existing regulatory framework. Working with a group of stakeholders that included representatives from the College Hill Neighborhood Association, Thayer Street District Management Authority, Wheeler School, Providence Preservation Society, RIPTA, Brown University, RISD, City Council, and the residential community, the consultants found that the area has significant untapped economic capacity. By promoting a broad mixture of uses and higher densities, and respecting the character of College Hill, it is possible to make a safer and more vibrant street that is an asset to the entire community. Key lessons learned from other similar streets across the country include the need for a strong management entity, physical improvements that create a clean and attractive environment, and focusing on non-retail uses to attract a diverse customer base.

To that end, Brown has committed to creating more public space by widening sidewalks at key intersections (Thayer/Cushing, Thayer/Meeting), improving the alley space at the end of Cushing Street, and adding street furniture. This work is intended to compliment efforts by the City to repave and restripe Thayer Street, Brook Street, Bowen Street, and Meeting Street to make a more pedestrian friendly environment, the PRA’s and Thayer Street District Management Authority’s construction of a temporary parklet, and RIPTA’s plan to enhance the top of the bus tunnel. By leveraging relatively small investments by all parties, substantial overall improvements can be made.

The University is also committed to working with the College Hill Neighborhood Association and the Thayer Street District Management Authority to coordinate advocacy and enforcement in an effort to reduce bad behavior. For example, a Guide for Business on Thayer Street will be created to set expectations for new and existing merchants on the street, aiding enforcement and a coordinated response to issues. This will take a concerted effort, so the University is increasing its support of the Thayer Street District Management Authority.