

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN



*13th Avenue Axis and the Memorial Quadrangle as viewed from Lillis, 2009*





# INTRODUCTION TO THE CAMPUS PLAN

Universities are extraordinary places. Nowhere else is there such a rich array of activities, all focused on creating a stimulating learning environment. An integral component of such an environment is the physical design of a university's campus – its buildings and open spaces.

The University of Oregon has a long and proud heritage of shared governance by faculty, staff, and students, all of whom have a role in creating the university's unique learning environment. A shared vision ensures that every change, big or small, will lead the university toward a unified and successful campus design. **The Campus Plan (the “Plan”) guides this shared vision by providing the principles and patterns that define the type and extent of future campus development.**

The university recognizes the need to respond quickly to emerging opportunities for facilities improvements, but also emphasizes long-range planning and the importance of maintaining continuity in development decisions over time. The Plan is based on a ten-year outlook, but its vision, patterns, and principles are useful for longer-term projections.



Memorial Quad, 2022

*“The outward aspect of the physical plant of a university should exemplify the teaching of that university – in good taste, beauty and efficiency.”*

-Ellis F. Lawrence, Campus Planner and  
Founder of the School of Architecture and  
Allied Arts and Dean, 1914-1946



Memorial Quad, 2019

*“New construction and beautification bring a tangible and exciting sense of renewal to a campus that is already both functional and visually stunning.”*

- David Frohnmayer,  
University of Oregon  
President, 1994-2009

## Vision

*The University of Oregon's campus will be responsive to the needs of its occupants, adaptable to emerging opportunities, and beautiful to behold.*



Lawrence Courtyard, c.1940



Knight Campus, 2019

### Responsive to the Needs of the Institution and its Occupants

University of Oregon facilities will support the institution's missions in teaching, research, and service to the state. Campus facilities exist solely to aid in achieving this mission. (Refer to UO mission in Appendix A.)

The university will continue to improve opportunities for broadly-based participation in facilities planning. Planning decisions, however, will be based primarily on overall institutional objectives and secondarily on departmental or non-institutional concerns.

### Ready to Adapt to Changing Opportunities

The Plan's premise is that the plan for the campus is a process rather than a fixed-image map. This unique concept evolved out of a 1974 project known as "The Oregon Experiment" (which is the subject of a book with the same title).

Restrictions inherent in a fixed-image campus plan make it difficult to respond to unpredictable changes. Instead, the university's planning decisions are guided by a process that engages users and is informed by a principle framework that preserves and enhances the essence of the campus as it is described below.

The university reaffirms the six basic principles articulated in The Oregon Experiment as the underlying premises of this Plan (listed in the side bar and defined in Appendix B).

#### *The Oregon Experiment's Six Basic Principles:*

- 1. Organic Order:** Campus design emerges through a process, not from a map.
- 2. Incremental Growth:** Development occurs in large and small pieces.
- 3. Patterns:** Shared design statements guide the planning process.
- 4. Diagnosis:** Assessing existing conditions informs ongoing improvements.
- 5. Participation:** User involvement must prevail throughout the planning process.
- 6. Coordination:** Working together benefits the campus as a whole.



## Beautiful to Behold

The fundamental character of the University of Oregon's campus is represented by a series of large open spaces, a mature landscape, and the accompanying buildings conceived and executed by Ellis F. Lawrence in the early part of the last century. The concepts Lawrence employed include high-quality, humanly scaled, carefully detailed buildings arranged around a system of open spaces interconnected by pathways. These concepts are the basis for further campus development.



Onyx Green, 2025

## Why Do We Do Campus Planning?

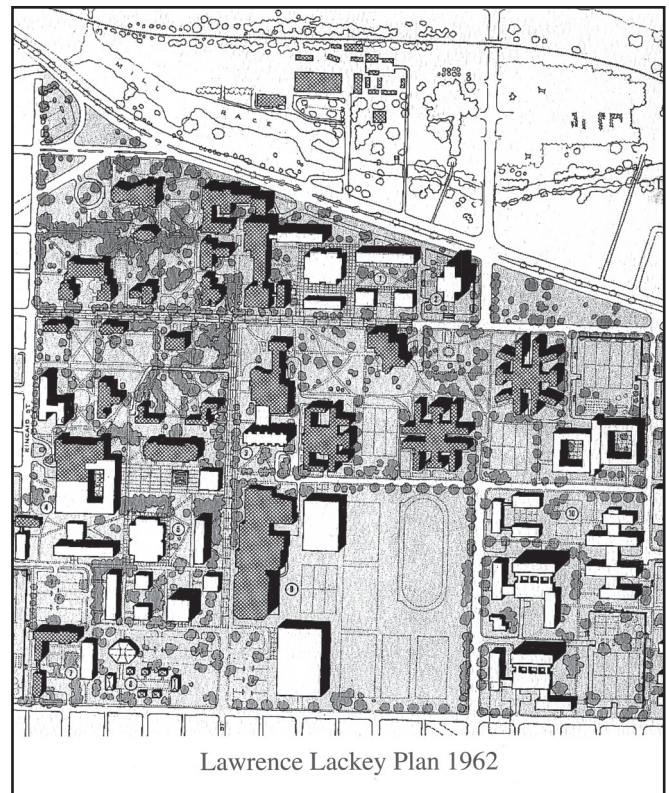
To remain vital, the University of Oregon needs facilities that effectively support its three-part mission of exceptional teaching, discovery, and public service. The campus itself is a strong recruitment tool for faculty and staff. Among other considerations, students make their decisions about which college to attend based on the “look and feel of the campus.” Also, avoiding past mistakes contributes to the retention of the best qualities of our campus. Without careful stewardship, the University of Oregon could lose its open spaces—one of our most distinguishing features—to new construction.

## History of the Campus Plan

This document contains a framework of principles intended to guide development of properties owned by the University of Oregon that are either within or outside of the Campus Boundaries. It is the most recent in a series of documents that began with Ellis Lawrence's preparation of a “Block Plan” of the campus in 1914. Lawrence revised his initial effort in 1923 and prepared a major modification in 1932.<sup>1</sup>

The concepts of spatial organization contained in these early plans were reflective of Lawrence's Beaux-Arts training and are still evident on this campus today. The principles expressed in this current document preserve and expand the network of interconnected quadrangles, squares, malls, and promenades, which were characteristic of Lawrence's early development pattern.

In 1962, the university selected urban designer Lawrence Lackey to prepare a new campus plan. That plan was a fixed-image map showing the future location of new buildings.<sup>2</sup> It provided some guidance for campus development,



Lawrence Lackey Plan 1962

<sup>1</sup> Michael Shellenbarger, “Ellis F. Lawrence: Nonresidential Designs,” *Harmony in Diversity: The Architecture and Teaching of Ellis F. Lawrence*, ed. Michael Shellenbarger (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1989), page. 48-50.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Lackey, *University of Oregon Campus Planning Studies Progress Report 3* (July 1962).

including the placement of Bean Hall, Oregon Hall, some science facilities, and an addition to Knight Library. Two major campus structures built in the late 1960s, the University Health and Counseling Center and the former law center, were not contemplated by the plan, and one of its main features – the development of academic buildings over the Pioneer Memorial Cemetery site – was never implemented.

By 1973, the need for a new plan was acknowledged, and the Center for Environmental Structure, headed by Christopher Alexander, was retained for that purpose. The result of this collaboration between the Center for Environmental Structure and the university was *The Oregon Experiment*.<sup>3</sup> Instead of creating a static fixed-image master plan *The Oregon Experiment* established a process by which development decisions could be made on an ongoing basis. This concept acknowledges the fact that the exact nature and magnitude of future changes cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, and that object-oriented plans based on explicit assumptions about the future become outdated as the “future” becomes known.

The 1991 Long Range Campus Development Plan represented a continuation of these planning traditions. A large body of norms, traditions, and development principles had developed over the course of the institution’s history, but had remained unwritten or at best recorded only in repetitive actions of individuals and groups engaged in campus development activities.



East Campus Green, 2024

The intent of the 1991 Plan was to unify in a systematic way those norms, traditions, and principles with the essential elements of the Lawrence ideal and the fundamental principles of *The Oregon Experiment*. The East Campus Green, shown below, was created in 1990 and is an example of the continued preservation and extension of Lawrence’s open-space framework.

The 2005 Plan replaces the 1991 Long Range Campus Development Plan. While the 2005 Plan modifies and refines portions of the 1991 Plan, the essence of the original document, which has served the campus well over the years, is preserved. (Refer to Appendix F for a description of the update process.)

The 2005 Plan was judged by the City of Eugene to be in compliance with the Metropolitan Area General Plan. In addition, the Plan complies with the requirements of relevant Oregon Administrative Rules and Statutes. (Refer to Appendix E.)

In 2011, the university adopted a policy entitled “Campus Planning” as part of a campus-wide effort to formalize all university policies. The new policy points to the Campus Plan for a description of the university’s requirements with respect to physical development of university properties. (Refer to the university’s Policy Library.)

In 2012, the Riverfront Research Park Conditional Use Permit expired along with the separate design process for this area. In 2018, a new Conditional Use Permit was approved by the City of Eugene. and in 2021, *Campus Plan* amendments fully integrated this area into the Plan.

In 2016, the Campus Physical Framework Vision Project was completed. This further provides greater specificity to the *Campus Plan* and was used to inform further amendments to the *Campus Plan*.

Plan amendments are described in Appendix K.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Alexander et al., *The Oregon Experiment* (New York: Oxford UP, 1975).