Development of Joint Venture Opportunities

Georgia State University should seek Public-Private Partnerships to improve the pedestrian experience, improve safety (and the perception of safety), renovate and refurbish Woodruff and Hurt Parks, and strengthen important corridors through campus north-to-south, like Piedmont Avenue, and east-west streets with concentrated student foot traffic like John Wesley Dobbs, Auburn and Edgewood Avenues. Important intersections at gateways to the campus should be marked architecturally and with special paving, landscape and signage. The University can leverage its status as a major stakeholder in downtown Atlanta to drive development in its environs to uses that augment and enhance student life and experience.
PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

Campus Clusters

Understanding the DNA of what exists – the “genus loci” of the setting - is essential to building what is best about it and enhancing and positively transforming it in ways that will be at once fresh and familiar to those who will use it. The physical analysis of each of Georgia State’s six campuses, therefore, was a critical first exercise as part of the Master Plan.

The overwhelming bulk of Georgia State’s facilities and student activities reside on its downtown campus – and University leadership intends to keep it that way, growing the University, in fact, by fifteen-percent (from 52,000 to 60,000 students), largely on the downtown campus – with few or no plans for growth on the Perimeter College campuses. Rather, the Perimeter Colleges are intended to feed the downtown campus – providing a two-year, transitional, educational experience toward completing a four-year degree on the main campus.

The focus of the Physical Analysis, therefore, concerned itself with the downtown context. The strategy for the Perimeter College campuses is to “brand” them as Georgia State with GSU colors, signage, and a commonality of exterior furniture, street furniture and lighting; some of which has already begun.

The following is a synopsis of the findings of the Physical Analysis phase of work.

Campus Core

Georgia State’s campus core pinwheels around Hurt Park, leaping Woodruff Park and extending west to the H.M. Aderhold Learning Center and Rialto Center for the Arts, as far east as Jesse Hill Junior Drive and reaching north along the Piedmont Avenue corridor beyond Ellis Street.

The beating heart of the campus core could be argued to be the two city blocks just south of Hurt Park - bordered by Gilmer Street to the north, Decatur Street to the south, Peachtree Center Avenue to the west and Piedmont Avenue to the east – as that two block area is home to Student Center East and West, the Urban Life building, Library North, Sparks Hall, Arts & Humanities, Langdale Hall and a planned new quadrangle where Kell Hall once stood (formed by Arts & Humanities, Sparks and Langdale Halls.)
Programs and Precincts

Precincts are emerging organically on the Georgia State campus and should be recognized and, perhaps, reinforced, generally, with new educational programs and facilities.

A Science Precinct is developing at the southeast corner of campus at “Science Park”, anchored by the Petit Science Center and Research Science Center, including planned new facilities for the sciences. The Petit Science Center houses the Departments of Biology and Chemistry, the Institutes of Neuroscience and Biomedical Science, Viral Immunology Center and features a Bio-Safety Level 4 Lab, one of only five in the United States.

An Arts Precinct is emerging at the northwest corner of campus in the historic Fairlie-Poplar district, revolving around the Rialto Center for the Arts and H.M. Aderhold Learning Center - with its Creation and Technology Lab (CATLAB), a general-use computer lab that offers state-of-the-art facilities to create, edit, and share media projects; where students work together in collaborative spaces with exceptional technical support.

To the northeast of the campus, along the Piedmont Avenue corridor, a Residential Precinct is growing. At issue with this is that student housing is removed from student activities, curricular and extracurricular, and the pedestrian desire lines are John Wessley Dobbs and Auburn Avenues – with the stretches between Piedmont Avenue and Peachtree Center Avenue largely not controlled by Georgia State and largely unpleasant to walk given their physical conditions (vacant lots, surface parking lots, dilapidated buildings, little (if any) active street front uses, etc); nor do they feel safe.

There are two, perhaps complimentary strategies to address this: One, Georgia State should set its eyes on strategic acquisitions of the blocks bordered by John Wessley Dobbs, Edgewood Avenue, Peachtree Center Avenue and Courtland Street; Two, Georgia State might consider encouraging that new student residence halls be built closer to the core campus.
Existing Open Spaces

Being an urban campus, Georgia State does not have a traditional network of open spaces in the form of quadrangles, allees, mews, courtyards and landscaped recreational areas. Atlanta's Woodruff Park and Hurt Park are the two primary open spaces within the University's downtown fabric. The Master Plan addresses possible improvements to these parks, which would benefit both the downtown business and Georgia State communities.

The existing courtyard formed by (what was) Kell Hall, Sparks Hall, Library North, and Langdale Hall is located at the core of the campus and represents Georgia State's most defined element of public realm that is controlled by the University.

The demolition of Kell Hall (Fall, 2018) makes way for a connection to the Atlanta Greenway initiative and further, the potential that Georgia State could develop a network of public realm of its own, controlled by the University – which became the focus of this Master Plan.

Other opportunity sites include the land west of Student Center East, at the corner of Courtland Street and Gilmer Street, and opportunity sites along John Wesley Dobbs, Auburn and Edgewood Avenues.

Parking

Parking is a threshold issue at Georgia State, in downtown Atlanta, as it is everywhere, and a somewhat contentious source of debate.

Given that Georgia State is inextricably woven into the downtown Atlanta fabric, with the State Capital (and the plethora of government workers that brings), Grady Memorial Hospital, hotels, conference centers, the relatively new Mercedes Benz Stadium and corporate headquarters like Georgia Power, parking (and traffic congestion) is a major issue.

The downtown area is served by three Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit rail, multiple MARTA bus stops and the Atlanta Streetcar system. Atlanta is a car-oriented culture, however, and usage of public transportation is lower than one would hope, compounding the parking issue.

Further compounding the parking issue is that an overwhelming majority of Georgia State students live off-campus (more than 80%), and drive to the University. Many also have part-time jobs and/or have started families – meaning time is especially precious to them so not only is an ample supply of parking critical to them, but conveniently located parking is equally important.
All that said, the City of Atlanta, with the Georgia Institute of Technology, has launched the SMART-ATL initiative that is focused on relieving traffic congestion and the demand for parking in the downtown Atlanta area.

The Master Plan also conceives of an integrated multi-modal transportation network of bicycle lanes, streetcar and shuttle buses, with a transit hub at Hurt Park, connecting downtown Atlanta and beyond to the new Georgia State Stadium where satellite parking might be located, taking demand off of inner city parking and opening the potential of demolishing existing parking structures within downtown to make room for additional open space or new program.
Street & Block Network

The downtown Atlanta Street & Block Network is varied - particularly across those areas of downtown occupied by Georgia State University. Also, south of Edgewood Avenue the street grid shifts forty-five degrees southwest – “bending” the major north-south avenues from Spring Street to Jesse Hill, Jr. Drive.

The Street & Block pattern of downtown is in three tiers:

- North of Edgewood Avenue and east of Peachtree Street is comprised of large blocks approximately 500’ X 500’, on average;

- South of Edgewood Avenue the block pattern is somewhat more manageable but still large with blocks in the range of 300’ X 400’ to 400’ X 500’;

- North of Marietta Street to Carnegie Way and west of Peachtree Street to Spring Street is the Historic Fairlie-Poplar District, made up of modestly scaled blocks of approximately 200’ X 200’, creating what is arguably the most pedestrian-friendly, human-scaled, urban fabric in the downtown area.
Street Hierarchy

The Street Hierarchy of Georgia State’s downtown campus is a series of primary, secondary and tertiary streets, beginning with major north-south and east-west corridors.

The major north-south corridors are:

- Spring Street
- Peachtree Street
- Peachtree Center Avenue
- Courtland Street, and
- Piedmont Avenue
The major east-west corridors are:

- Andrew Young International Boulevard
- Ellis Street
- John Wesley Dobbs Avenue
- Auburn Avenue
- Edgewood Avenue, and
- Decatur/Marietta Street

The secondary streets are:

- Gilmer Street
- Wall Street
- Pryor Street, and
- Carnegie Way

The tertiary streets are located primarily in the historic Fairlie-Poplar District and include:

- Broad Street
- Forsyth Street
- Farilie Street
- Cone Street
- Williams Street
- Luckie Street
- Poplar Street, and
- Walton Street
Street Design

The Master Plan proposes a series of improvements to the downtown streetscape, in the form of street sections, including:

- More two way streets
- More on-street parking
- More street trees
- Improved street lighting
- Elimination of “free right” hand turns
- Fewer curb cuts where possible
- Bicycle lanes, and
- Tighter turning radii at street intersections
Existing Street Conditions

The downtown campus includes a variety of street types, widths and configurations, as the illustrated in the adjacent diagram:

- One-Way Streets: three (3) to six (6) lanes
- Two-Way Streets: two (2) lanes with two (2) parallel parking berths
- Two-Way Streets with an Atlanta Street Car lane
- One-Way Streets in the historic Fairlie-Poplar District

The following pages illustrate the Existing Street Conditions as they are found today in photographs and diagrammatic sections – and outline issues and ideas for each of the downtown area’s streets.
Historic Grid

Trolley Street: Two-Way with Trolley
Two-Way: 2 Lanes/2 Parking Lanes
One-Way: 3 to 6 Lanes

Proposed 'Alley / Mews'

LEGEND

Auburn Ave.
John Wesley Dobbs Ave.
Piedmont Ave.
Courtland St.
Peachtree Center Ave.
Park Pl.
Peachtree St.
Jesse Hill Jr Dr.
Ellis St.
Edgewood Ave.
Gilmer St.
Decatur St.
Central Ave.
Pryor St.

Due Diligence and Discovery

COOPER ROBERTSON