

Notes: Workshop 05 Steering Committee Meeting

Project	UNT Campus Master Plan Update	Project No.	2025-3605 (UNTS) 52AC24018 (Page)
Client	UNT System	Location	Bruce Concert Hall
Date	11 December, 2025	Time	9:00am – 11:00am

Attendees

- ☑ Heidi Elmendorf, UNT, Deputy to the President for University Initiatives
- ☑ James Garrison - UNT, Chief Information Officer
- ☑ Elizabeth With - UNT, Vice President of Student Affairs
- ☑ Michael McPherson - UNT, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
- ☑ Casandra Nash - UNT, Director Planning, Design and Construction
- ☑ Brandon Buzbee - UNT, Vice President of University Advancement
- ☑ Rutwik Duggireddy – UNT, Student Government Association President
- ☑ Montana Montgomery – UNT, Interior Design Student
- ☑ Meredith Butler- UNTS, Director of Planning
- ☑ Brian Cay – UNTS, Associate Director of Master Planning
- ☑ Ryan Losch, Page, Principle in Charge
- ☑ Corey Rothermel, Page, Project Manager
- ☑ Elizabeth Foster, Page, Visioning Principal
- ☑ Alex Lara, Page, Lead, Urban Designer

Overview

The workshop focused on opportunities to align the campus master plan with UNT's new strategic plan alongside review of strategies for specific campus projects.

Notes:

Strategic Plan vs. Master Plan (Big Picture Framing / Orientation Discussion)

- Desire to avoid a master plan that feels like a generic university. UNT should lean into what is uniquely UNT.
- The master plan needs to be flexible and adaptive to allow UNT to shift and evolve. Industry projections about the future of higher education have historically been wrong, so flexibility is essential.
- Planning Context

- The strategic plan should be an important starting point, but we should not treat it as strict criteria because it would shorten the master plan's shelf-life.
- The strategic plan is a 5-year look, while the campus master plan is a 15- to 20-year look. The master plan must take a long-term view — we are planning a campus for students who “aren't born yet.”
- We will likely get only 1 or 2 truly “good” projects within the next five years, so the master plan must be structured in a way that guides those early decisions while setting up long-term success.
- Need a living document: near-term recommendations should have the greatest specificity, while long-term components should remain more flexible.
- “Connectivity” is preferred over “porosity.” Connectivity is intentional; porosity can be accidental. Stakeholders emphasized intentional industry, community college, high school, and external connections as part of this theme.
- Need to achieve consensus on the larger themes (e.g., “porous,” “flexible,” “connectivity,” etc.) so they serve as lasting guideposts.
- Stewardship model: as we renovate facilities, make sure we are incorporating these themes in all renovation and capital renewal work.
- Continue incorporating student input — they are most in tune with evolving student needs.

Learning from Industry

- Look at what major industry players (e.g., Microsoft) are doing — not to replicate but to use their standards and practices as helpful guidelines for designing environments that students will later encounter in their careers.
- The goal is to create environments that are industry-aligned, adaptable, and support the dynamic nature of teaching and learning.

Development: Residence Life, Space, and Enrollment Growth

- UNT has historically been a high-commuter campus. Expanding Res-Life will impact that dynamic, but the university's educational model (executive education, workforce development, etc.) will continue to generate in-and-out movement. Need to balance these competing demands.
- Each student population requires different kinds of space (home room space, study space, identity-building space). One size does not fit all.
- Current residential capacity is insufficient.
 - Previous plans have revealed a deficit in capacity that UNT is working to address
 - The university cannot house the entire freshman class.
 - Much of the existing inventory is tailored to upper-division students (suites); not all housing supports freshman needs.
- Stakeholder question: Are we being aggressive enough?
 - There are 1,000 beds currently in the works.
 - Desire for additional beds beyond that in the next 5 to 7 years to keep up, then reassess based on enrollment trends and national shifts.

- Residence halls serve as a “home” for those who live there, but not for those who don’t. We need to balance residential spaces with campus-life spaces for commuter students (e.g., Union, Library).
- Housing is a unique Denton need — less critical in Frisco, where the model is executive education and part-time student populations.
- Parking is critical. If people cannot get to campus easily, UNT won’t be a place they want to be.
- Campus must support projected enrollment growth with sufficient and appropriate space.
- Stakeholders expressed interest in autonomous vehicles between Main Campus and Discovery Park.
- Over a 15- to 20-year horizon, technology will change drastically. Facilities should be built with flexible infrastructure.

Technology and Facilities: Being Future-Ready

- Frisco’s newest building was intended for corporate partnerships, yet many spaces are not hybrid-equipped — a mismatch that should be prevented in future projects.
- Recommendation: the master plan should propose reconvening before each capital project to evaluate current needs and technology standards.
- “Plumb the technology”: even if we don’t yet know what tools will be needed, the infrastructure should support quick implementation of emerging technologies.

Interdisciplinary and Campus Connectivity Themes

- Key strategic plan theme: porous / easy to come and go. Ingredients include:
 - Physical components (edges, gateways, navigation)
 - Programs offered
 - Spaces (home rooms, study areas, identity spaces)
 - Technology
 - Flexibility
 - Connectivity
 - Overall sense of evolving and dynamic activity
- Interdisciplinary hubs should occur across all domains, not just academic.
 - Overlap between disciplines is where innovation happens.
 - Must be intentional, with people who are “bought in.”
 - Just putting people together does not create interdisciplinarity — cultural change is needed.
- S&T Building example: legacy thinking that “I should only be next to people in my own department.” This mindset will be even harder to shift when disciplines are more extreme (ex: information + arts).
- Connectivity between Main Campus, Discovery Park, and Frisco will be important.

Discovery: Creativity, Activity, and Partnerships

- Discovery Park embodies the energy, communication, and connectivity UNT wants on the main campus — including strong engagement with industry partners.

- Discovery is an opportunity to merge creativity (Music, CVAD, arts) with research. Creativity is a strong, unique UNT asset.
- STEM is also fundamentally creative, reinforcing the value of interdisciplinary intersections.
- Need to think about where creativity spills out onto campus — informal drumming, spontaneous arts, band activity, etc. These moments are similar to desire lines in pedestrian movement. The master plan should create environments that celebrate spontaneous creativity as a uniquely UNT characteristic.
- UNT is not currently great at hosting activities or external partners. The master plan can help address this.
- Example: murals on the ground near CVAD — potential to extend this expression across the larger campus.

Drive: Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Internal + External Connectivity

- Entrepreneur spaces are lacking today. Stakeholders would like to see examples from other places that do this well.
- Entrepreneurs tolerate risk; government typically does not. Students are often willing to take risks — how do we recruit, connect, and support those students?
- Need spaces that connect multiple disciplines (not siloed).
- Hotel/conference space is needed — could tie to the Gateway Center and Denton's off-campus conference resources.
- Make internships visible and accessible so students believe opportunities are achievable.
- Many UNT faculty and staff are alumni or active students — a unique UNT characteristic that can be leveraged in mentoring, networks, and culture.
- The categories we use “aren't right” — identity and community are more complex.
 - “Drive” is not just UNT → industry; it is also UNT → UNT.
 - Everyone has multiple identities, and spaces should support that complexity.

Strategic Plan Section – Final Reflections

- Set a foundation for the vision, but allow the plan to propel UNT beyond it.
- Build in flexibility.
- Consider what hasn't changed in human needs.
 - The Town Square idea has sustained itself for centuries.
 - Centrality and community remain important.
- Also consider what tried to change but wasn't successful, and reverted back.
- Rigidity will cause the plan to be discarded quickly.
- Must identify measurables — how do we know we are adequately serving the population as we grow?
 - Embed these metrics in the plan.
 - Commit to revisiting the plan if metrics aren't met.

Putting the Vision Into Action

- Interdisciplinary hubs will require significant cultural change, not just co-location.
- Need intentional strategies to break down siloes — staff as well as academic.

Open Space

- The next iteration of the plan will expand the open space network and introduce concept sketches for key spaces.
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City Center

- Stakeholders reviewed early configuration options.
 - Current concepts put too much burden on the visitor to figure out where to go.
 - Arrival sequence is unclear.
 - The space should meet the “hospitality” standard from the Strategic Plan discussion.
- The campus needs some kind of orientation point — welcome center, visitor center, wayfinding/signage, pull-aside booth, etc.
- Campus needs better wayfinding in general.
- Question raised about flipping the multi-generational community node with the innovation community node, especially since the innovation community lacks student presence and risks becoming an island.
- Think about what Gateway Center needs to be in the future — and include it within City Center planning. Same for the Performing Arts Center.
- If the arena goes on the south side, ensure people know why they’re entering campus — arrival must feel intentional.
- Cannot have an environment that feels like “if you know, you know.”
- Need directional signage and a clear progression and connection between spaces.