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Introduction and Purpose

Penn State’s Mission:

*Penn State is a multi-campus public land-grant university that improves the lives of the people of Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world through integrated, high-quality programs in teaching, research, and service.*

To assist in achieving this mission, a Campus Exterior Architecture Plan, know as a CEAP, is developed to suggest ways to improve the aesthetic qualities of campus with low-cost and easy-to-implement concepts that can have meaningful impacts. The CEAP is a planning tool that is an outgrowth of the campus master planning process.

The CEAP includes graphic and narrative descriptions of existing conditions on campus and approximately 15-20 improvement concepts. Positive features may also be identified as elements to emulate.

The improvement concepts are ranked or prioritized according to their visual impact and estimated cost. The concepts are not final designs. Further study and design are required prior to implementation.
Existing Conditions Inventory

Background:

Penn State Abington presently occupies approximately 49 acres of property within the City of Abington. The campus is noted for its beautiful park-like setting, mature trees and several outstanding examples of early 19th century architecture. The campus is surrounded by an equally beautiful residential neighborhood.

A detailed site analysis, campus vision and future development strategy are fully documented in the campus master plan. In addition, a more focused walking assessment of the campus established the foundation for the recommendations and concepts contained in this CEAP document.

General Observations:

Academic buildings have been located on the perimeter of campus preserving a large campus core characterized by mature wooded hillsides, drainage swales and an open recreational area. The facilities are well maintained and demonstrate a cared for image to students, faculty and staff as well as the general public. Because on-campus housing does not exist at Abington, commuting students must park in one of the large lots. Some of the existing on-campus parking facilities are inadequately screened from view.

Pedestrian circulation is well defined and adequately maintained. Due to the topography of the site there are isolated ADA challenges that must be addressed. Improved outdoor gathering spaces are limited.

The figures that follow identify and elaborate on specific features of the campus exterior.
The original stone buildings on campus establish an architectural quality and aesthetic that should be preserved and protected. Most notably are the Lares Building and Sutherland Building.

The predominant building material is limestone. Future modifications and/or additions to existing stone buildings should respect this treasured resource. The goal of preserving stylistic character should be considered when developing exterior improvements such as walls, site furnishings, lighting and planting designs. Major architectural modifications, additions, and new construction are beyond the scope of this CEAP.
A wide variety of types and styles of benches, tables, trash receptacles and planters exist on the campus. It is recommended that one standard design be selected for each that compliments the campus architecture and landscape to unify the campus aesthetic. In addition to aesthetic appropriateness, the longevity and maintenance of site furnishings should be considered when specifying.
Exterior lighting on campus is relatively uniform. Fixtures and poles appear to be in good condition and are appropriately scaled. Walkway lights are not cut-off fixtures. Lamping is high pressure sodium.
At the time of this writing directional signage has recently been updated on the campus perimeter. Collaboration with the surrounding neighborhood has resulted in a satisfactory design. Campus entry sign is in need of repair. Campus wayfinding maps are in need of updating. Several deviations from the University Signage Standards with respect to the Penn State Mark, and building identification signs have been noted.
The campus landscape is park-like as characterized by mature trees and sloping topography. Ornamental plantings are conservative and appropriate.
ADA compliant pedestrian circulation is and will always be a challenge on this campus due to the topographic condition. Under utilized expansive paved areas exist. The predominance of pedestrian walkways through campus are surfaced with asphalt.
Barriers
Existing Conditions Inventory

A variety of physical barriers are used throughout the campus to control vehicular and pedestrian movement.
Unique Features
Existing Conditions Inventory

Water feature and wooded walkways all contribute to the character of the campus. Enhancements and focused maintenance at these features can showcase the heritage and unique aesthetic character of the campus.
Improvement Recommendations

The following figures describe and illustrate possible solutions to specific aesthetic and functional shortcomings on campus, most of which are addressable through the CEAP program. In addition to the recommendations that follow, there are routine maintenance tasks that will enhance the aesthetic appeal of campus without added capital cost. Suggestions include:

► Mulch landscape beds annually
► Eradicate weeds
► Fertilize lawn areas
► Limit use of annual and perennial flowers to areas that can be maintained
► Continue supplementing perimeter buffer screening

An implementation priority matrix follows that lists improvement projects and recommends the order in which the projects could be executed. The implementation ranking is intended as a guideline for realizing the most significant impacts early in the plan implementation.

Location specific projects are keyed to the map with numbers corresponding to the listing on the matrix at the end of this report.
A cost effective strategy for freshening the appearance of existing buildings is the use of pressure washing to remove dirt and mildew stains. Propose the implementation of an annual cleaning program campus wide.
The service area on the north end of Woodland Building is conspicuously evident when approaching the campus along Woodland Road. In lieu of relocating the use to another location, the area should be screened. Because of the need to access the area with delivery and trash trucks it is not feasible to achieve adequate screening with vegetation.

The installation of a gated screen fence to enclose the yard is proposed.
Site furnishings designed in a style “family” provide a unifying aesthetic theme. The examples shown here will compliment the predominant colonial architectural style present on the campus. Teak wood benches or powder coated metal are attractive, comfortable and durable.

Planters should be appropriately sized for the space they occupy and be constructed of durable, quality material. The example at left is cast limestone in a simple yet appealing style recalling the colonial character of signature campus buildings.
Emergency Phone Improvement Recommendation

Replace call box emergency phones with state of the art pole style.
Assess the need for a phone booth and remove or relocate to a less prominent location.
Parking Lot Control Kiosk

Improvement Recommendation

Existing parking lot control gates are unsightly. Paint existing pipe bollards and card key black. Eliminate pink striping on drop bars.
Existing bill posting kiosk is in a state of disrepair. Though this feature is centrally located, it is vulnerable to misuse. If the campus has determined that such a feature is required, it should be located in closer proximity to a campus building and should be maintained on a regular basis.
Where it's deemed necessary to place roadway guiderails, consider the use of a timber system to blend with the character of campus.
Barrier Removal
Improvement Recommendation

A variety of vehicular and pedestrian traffic control barriers exist across the campus. Barriers can be visually distracting when their placement is not necessary. There may be opportunities to edit out some of the post and chain and other fencing.
Abington Campus Exterior Architectural Plan

ADA Access Improvement Recommendation

Remove temporary ramp and replace with concrete walk.

Before

After
Plan for phased replacement of any antiquated, inefficient pedestrian walkway lighting. Propose the use of metal halide lamps in cut-off luminaires mounted to poles. Avoid the use of bollards due to vulnerability to snow removal operations and vandalism.
Comprehensive standardized signage across campus conveys a unified image. These examples illustrate the standard adopted at University Park. The manual specifying the standards can be found at www opp psu edu stnd signage index html

WOODLAND BUILDING

Wall-mounted Building Identifier Sign
- Aluminum cutout letters mounted to non-illuminated painted aluminum backer pan.
- 6" high 1 1/2" deep satin finish letters
- Font style: Gill Sans Light

Campus Map/Wayfinding
Entrance Sign Renovation

The existing sign wall at the campus entrance is in need of renovation. The letters forming the campus name are difficult to read. The stone is discolored from dirt and moss. Foreground landscape plantings are seasonal and don’t provide year-round interest.

The wall should be pressure washed and pointing between stones repaired. It is suggested that the top of the wall and pilasters be replaced with cast stone caps to refine the aesthetic quality of the sign. The opportunity exists to upgrade signage to comply with the adopted standard for the University mark. Foreground landscape should combine evergreen plant material as well as annual or perennial flower accents.
The corridor between the parking deck and Woodland Building is harsh and unattractive. There is existing asphalt paved area that is currently striped to prohibit parking. Pedestrian connections to a primary building entrance are nondescript and difficult to locate.

By removing a strip of unused asphalt and replacing with a landscape planting bed, the area can become more attractive and potentially safer for pedestrians. A new raised curb along the edge of the planting will prevent vehicles from hitting the building. The curb will also function to direct water run-off to storm drains.
The pass through patio area on the ground floor of Woodland Building is inhospitable to potential users. Seating is not provided for with tables and chairs. The concrete slab is expansive and harsh.

Remove the slab and replace with an enhanced paver surface. Leave areas for permanent landscape plantings to diminish the hardness of the space and provide interest. Furnish with new tables and chairs.
The existing entry court on the north side of Sutherland Building is characterized by wide expanses of asphalt paving. Site lighting is deficient. Furnishings in the space are mismatched and stylistically inappropriate. A massive oak tree specimen presides over the space giving scale to the building.

The enhancement concept for this landmark space shows plentiful and varied seating options within the outdoor room that’s formed by low stone walls. Pedestrian flow is maintained and night time safety improved through the installation of period style site lights. Hardscape surfacing extends to the building face to accommodate large groups and occasional vehicular access. Period style planters are placed strategically adjacent to the building in gaps between windows.
Existing parking stalls on the south side of Sutherland Building are visible from School Lane and the surrounding neighborhood. By shifting the parking stalls to the north side of the existing paved area the vantage point from School Lane is altered enough to obscure views of the cars. A secondary benefit of this shift is the elimination of the need for pedestrians to cross the traffic aisle to access campus.
The opportunity exists to reduce or simplify maintenance of drainage ways by eliminating grass which requires mowing. Channels necessary for run-off water conveyance can become aesthetic amenities through sensitive treatment using rocks and appropriate landscape vegetation.
The value of the mature tree cover on campus has inestimable worth to the campus, the neighborhood and the environment. Existing trees should be assessed regularly for damage and pests. Even with such attention, the lifespan of trees is finite. To lessen the impact of future tree loss the campus should routinely under plant wooded areas with new growth that will ultimately replace inevitable losses.
The retaining wall and perimeter fence at the existing tennis courts are in need of repair/replacement. The masonry wall is beginning to fail and the fence is beginning to rust.

Propose the removal of the existing retaining wall and replacement with a lower wall. This can be accomplished by modifying the grade behind the wall to reduce the necessary height and stepping the top. Revised grading can also accomplish better drainage behind the wall.

The fence should be consistent in height around the entire perimeter. Vinyl coated chain link fence fabric is recommended to increase longevity.
The existing sports fields in the center of campus are an important open space that should remain. To the south of the existing ball field backstop is a wetland area created by stormwater management facilities. To the north is an existing walkway bordered by a stone retaining wall.

The field should be relocated to optimize the orientation of the ball field for play. Additional benefits of this adjustment include separation from the wetland, closer proximity to locker room facilities in the Physical Education Building and consolidation of support structures (backstop and bleachers) with the existing tennis courts and perimeter fence. A new segment of walkway is also proposed to supplement access.
The proposed exterior improvement projects have been assessed with respect to the following criteria and assigned an implementation priority value. **Criteria include:**

- **Visual Impact** - degree to which the project improves the visual quality of the campus
- **Cost** - level of capital investment required to implement the project (assumes no volunteer or donor contribution)

The projects with the highest numeric score should be given the highest priority for implementation.

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>VISUAL IMPACT</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pressure Wash (campus wide)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Woodland Bldg Dumpster Screen</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Site Furnishings (campus wide)</td>
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<td>Emergency (Codeblue) Phones</td>
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**Note:**

- Cost ranges identified in this matrix are for planning purposes only. Actual costs will be dependent upon fully developed plans for the respective project. Some of the projects listed above can be broken down into smaller pieces and implemented in phases.