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**San Francisco State University  
Campus Master Plan**

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**Chapter 1.  
Executive Summary**

# 1. Executive Summary

## Setting the Bar

***San Francisco State University aspires to be the nation's preeminent public urban university.***

—San Francisco State University Strategic Plan 2005–2010

Although ambitious, this goal is ultimately achievable because of the University's history of academic excellence, its clear strategic vision, and its unique setting in one of the world's great cities. The 2007–2020 San Francisco State University Campus Master Plan provides a vision and clear action plan for the physical development of the campus through 2020 that will enable the University to continue to provide access to high-quality higher education.

This is a physical master plan. Its purpose is to create the physical and functional setting that will facilitate achievement of the University's strategic goals and support its academic mission. Specifically, the plan identifies facility, site, and infrastructure projects that address existing deficiencies and accommodate an increase in enrollment from 20,000 to 25,000 full-time equivalent students (FTES) by the year 2020. While



*Aerial Photo of Existing Campus*







the master plan adds roughly 800,000 gross square feet of new academic and academic/support space to the campus by 2020, all new buildings, with the exception of Creative Arts and Facilities/corporation yard, are located on the sites of existing outmoded buildings that are slated for replacement. All new development occurs within the existing campus boundary.

The starting point for the physical master plan is the University's strategic plan, which is based on a set of core values that underlie all areas of campus endeavor. They are:

- Equity and Social Justice
- Community Engagement
- International Perspectives
- Opportunities for Personal and Professional Growth



*SF State's unique setting in an area rich in ecological heritage provides inspiration to the master plan.*



These core values are expressed in the common themes that run throughout the strategic plan. They are:

- Academic Excellence
- Improved Access and Flexibility for Diverse Communities
- Engaged and Expanded Intellectual Community
- Institutional Culture that Supports Change and Innovation

In particular, one statement in the strategic plan served as a guiding force for the planning process, suggesting the potential of the master plan to make the University's core values evident in the design of the physical environment:

*SFSU remains committed to modeling on campus...the world in which we would like to live.*

The characteristics of that world—social responsibility, equity, community engagement, innovation, and achieving individual excellence—coupled with the California State University (CSU) system's commitment to sustainability set a clear agenda and high standard for what this master plan must accomplish.

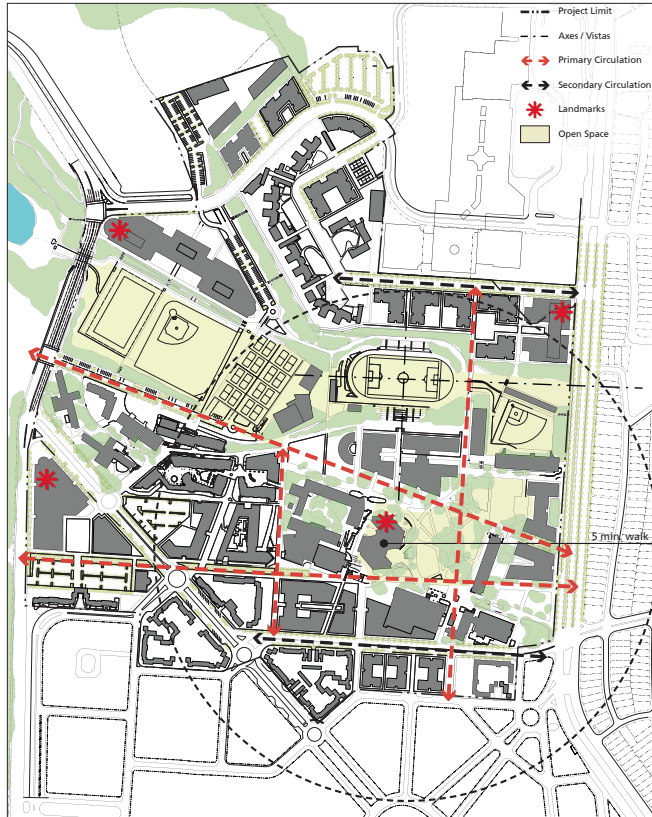
Using the strategic plan as a starting point, a group of students, faculty, staff, and administrators met early in the planning process to brainstorm about the future campus. The resulting vision statement guided exploration of options and is the foundation of a long-term vision and master plan characterized by:

- Strong Connections to the Surrounding City
- Universal Access and Safety
- Emphasis on the Pedestrian and Alternative Transportation
- A Continuous Greenbelt between 19th Avenue and Lake Merced
- A Vibrant On-Campus Community
- Recognition in the City and Region
- A Campus that Models Sustainability

As the planning team explored ways to give physical form to the campus vision, one question persisted: What are the physical indicators of a preeminent urban university campus? To find an answer, the team investigated numerous precedents to determine which physical characteristics distinguish them as premier urban campuses. Three important traits emerged:

- Distinctive Urbanism
- Memorable Public Open Space
- Vibrant Campus Community

Distinctive urbanism describes the quality and character of the campus's architecture, edges, and deliberately shaped spaces. Memorable public open space defines the nature and quality of the collective outdoor social and recreational spaces. And a vibrant campus community describes a residential community well integrated with a variety of social uses and destinations. By embodying all these characteristics, the master plan lays the groundwork for the University to achieve its strategic aspirations.



Organizing Framework

## Achieving the Vision

The master plan is guided by a set of principles based on a broader long-term vision for the campus. This vision describes a sustainable residential campus community organized around the central valley as a prominent greenway, strongly connected to the neighboring districts, and served by public transportation and neighborhood services.

The University seeks approval from the Board of Trustees for the specific elements contained in the master plan. Elements of the long-term vision that extend beyond 2020, described in Chapter 5, are presented as a conceptual guide, but are considered too uncertain in terms of timing, configuration, and program to include in the master plan for approval at this time. A clear vision for the future, however, does ensure that each decision about the campus is deliberate, and contributes to the overall functional and aesthetic clarity of the campus.

*Master Plan Overall Perspective. New campus axes—reinforced by buildings and tree rows—clarify the campus organization and extend the core westward. The valley becomes the important central green space of the campus.*





The master plan gives form to the campus vision and principles through the following key moves:

***Reinforcing the academic core and extending it westward***

The declining condition of existing academic buildings around the historic Quad together with the proposed location of the Creative Arts complex at the western edge of campus present a significant opportunity to strengthen the academic core and extend it westward. The master plan positions new replacement academic buildings over time on “redevelopment” sites freed by the demolition of outmoded facilities. New buildings are sited both to reinforce the orientation of the Quad and to integrate new east-west axial alignments. New academic buildings sited along these axes extend the academic core westward.

***Strengthening the University’s connections to Lake Merced and the surrounding neighborhoods***

The University is uniquely positioned in proximity to Lake Merced and other important recreational resources such as Fort Funston and Harding Park Golf Course, and is adjacent to Stonestown Galleria and to several San Francisco neighborhoods, including Lakeside, Lakeshore Acres, Merced Manor, and Parkmerced. Yet, the University remains isolated and disconnected from its surroundings due not only to the significant barriers posed by 19th Avenue and Lake Merced Boulevard, but also to a general lack of connective network. The master plan removes barriers and enhances connections to these surrounding areas through paths, public space connections, crossings, open views and vistas, and a campus edge that is more inviting to the larger community.

***Creating east-west functional and visual connections***

The Arts Allée, which connects the Quad to the Creative Arts complex, is a strong pedestrian connector and signature landscape element within the academic core. A second east-west axis runs diagonally through the Quad, visually and physically connecting the core to the valley and Lake Merced beyond. These new axes better link the campus internally and to the surrounding neighborhoods and visually reinforce the relationship of the campus to Lake Merced. The east-west alignments and north-south connectors together form a strong organizing framework that determines the location of new buildings, clarifies wayfinding, and provides universal access throughout the campus.

***Creating strong north-south connections across the valley and Holloway Avenue that link the University to its residential districts***

With the recent acquisition of University Park North (UPN), the valley, which once formed the northern edge of campus, now can play a central role. Yet, it also presents a significant obstacle between UPN and the academic core.

Likewise, Holloway Avenue—once the southern edge of campus—acts as a barrier to circulation between the academic core and University Park South (UPS). The master plan firmly links the campus across the valley by way of a distinctive pedestrian and bicycle bridge and creates better links across Holloway, making this corridor a more pedestrian-oriented, functional, and integrated part of campus.

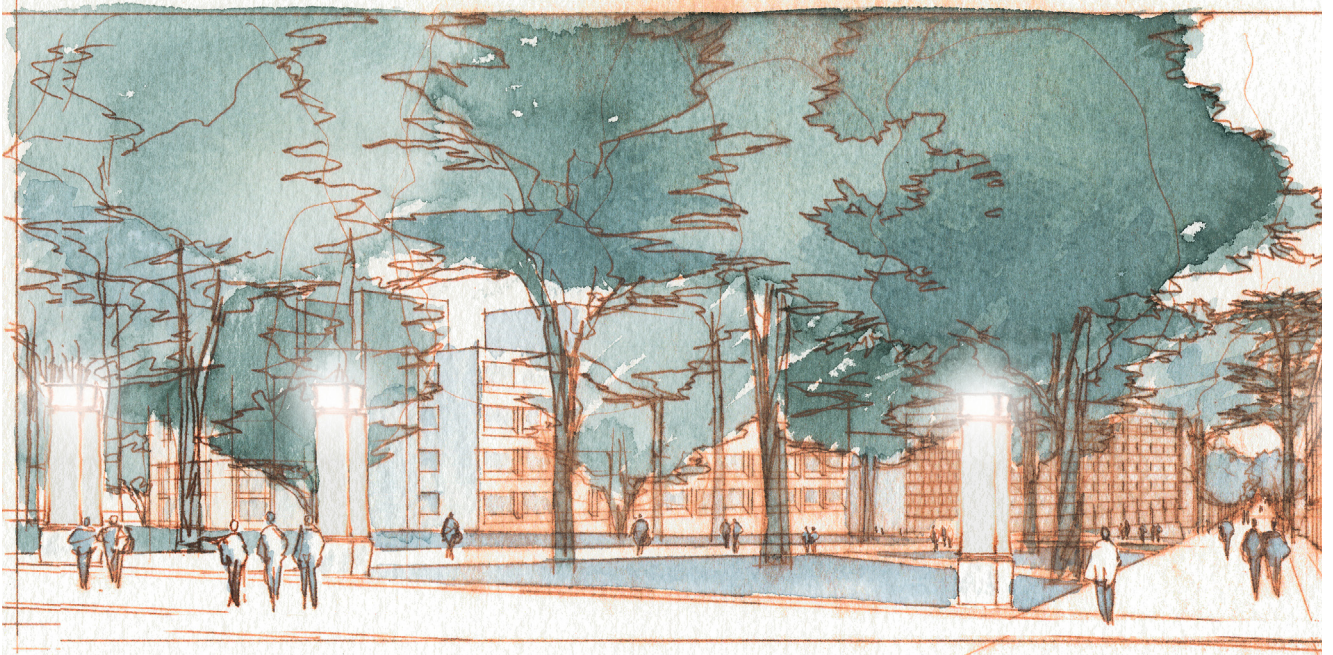
*Establishing the valley as the central open space of campus*

With the extension of the campus northward to encompass UPN, the valley assumes a more central role as an open space amenity, improved for outdoor recreation and enhanced as an ecological resource with native plant communities and natural drainage. A key addition to the valley is a surface creek, which evokes the former stream lost through an underground piping project in the 1940s. The creek captures the stormwater runoff only from the immediate campus drainage basin and flows westward through a proposed underpass/bridge beneath Lake Merced Boulevard into Lake Merced, re-establishing this historic connection. A natural stormwater treatment network ensures a high level of water quality. Recreational trails run across and along the length of the valley, eventually tying into the Lake Merced trail network via the proposed underpass.

*View from Millennium Bridge looking southwest across Cox Stadium to the new Science and Ethnic Studies & Psychology complex. Thornton Hall is on the left.*







*Beacons and an expanded green mark the campus entry at 19th and Holloway Avenues.*

***Positioning semi-public uses at the corners of campus to create icons that redefine the University's external identity***

Landmark buildings containing semi-public uses mark the corners of campus. These uses—the Creative Arts complex, gym/recreation-wellness center, and University Conference Center—not only serve the campus community, but also attract outside users for performances, conferences, lodging and the like. Placed strategically at prominent campus corners, they serve as icons that project a strong and identifiable image for the University and invite the larger community into the campus.

***Creating an identifiable and inviting campus perimeter***

Through the establishment of architectural and landscape guidelines, the master plan strengthens the University's visual identity along the perimeter of campus. The master plan creates a permeable building edge, with landscape and portals that invite the public into campus.

***Emphasizing transit, walking, biking, and other non-auto modes***

As an urban public university in California, SF State already enjoys low drive-alone commute rates. To provide even better transportation choices, the plan includes significant on-campus improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users, and it also proposes partnerships with other agencies and landowners to improve access off campus.

### *Decentralizing parking*

To restore the valley as the central open space of the campus and reduce the impact of automobile traffic on the campus and its neighbors, the plan proposes decentralizing its parking supply over time in a series of facilities located at the campus perimeter. This promotes the dispersal and interception of traffic from various directions, and it allows the efficient sharing of parking resources with a variety of users.

### *Minimizing parking spillover and keeping the parking system financially solvent*

California state law restricts the use of academic funds for parking facilities, requiring instead that parking construction and operations be financed through parking fees. Because building parking is expensive—about \$20,000 a space in a structure—adding new parking on campus will significantly increase current parking fees. The result will be greater demand for transit and other non-auto modes, and also greater potential for spillover parking into surrounding neighborhoods.

To minimize spillover parking and keep the parking system financially solvent, the master plan calls for carefully balancing parking additions and losses in such a way that resulting price increases hold demand steady. The plan also supports working with the City and the surrounding neighborhoods to make adjustments to Residential Parking Permit programs to better protect neighborhood from the negative impacts of spillover parking.

### *Establishing the 19th Avenue edge as a transit-, bike-, and pedestrian-friendly parkway*

19th Avenue was originally part of San Francisco's grand plan for a network of parkways connecting the city's diverse neighborhoods. While Sunset Boulevard and Park Presidio were implemented, the plan for 19th Avenue was not. Although improvements to 19th Avenue are beyond the scope of this study and must to be undertaken jointly with the City and Caltrans, the master plan offers recommendations for this important corridor for two reasons: to enhance the campus's most public and visible urban edge and to advance the original concept of 19th Avenue as a landscaped parkway that balances transit, auto, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation. The City's recent Green Streets initiative is compatible with this approach.

### *Redefining Holloway and Buckingham as "college main streets" that anchor the residential districts*

Urban universities throughout the country have recognized the importance of housing in recruiting and retaining students and faculty, and in building campus community. Equally important are vibrant campus main streets that offer a variety of services, social activities, and amenities. The addition of UPN and UPS expands SF State's ability to provide housing. To support the University's growing residential community and to serve the neighborhoods, the master plan locates "college main streets" on both the north and south edges of campus. Holloway Avenue and Buckingham Way are con-



ceived as vibrant retail streets with housing and a mix of uses that offer opportunities for shopping, dining, entertainment, and social services, ensuring that the campus and district operate as a walkable, integrated, and sustainable community.

### *Modeling sustainability*

Through a number of interrelated strategies—close-in affordable housing for faculty, staff, and students, green building and site design, native landscape, natural storm-water management, emphasis on public transit and bicycle commuting, walkable neighborhood retail—the master plan makes sustainability an integral and visible part of day-to-day campus life. Collectively, these strategies advance system-wide sustainability goals set forth in California State University Executive Order 987, August 2006, and make the campus a living laboratory for sustainability to educate students who are informed and responsible citizens.

*View looking west along Holloway. Bicycle lanes, tree-lined sidewalks, and ground-floor shops and cafés make Holloway a vibrant campus main street.*



