Significance and Change at the University

Since its establishment on the ridge at Burnet Woods in 1895, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has moved through various periods of development significant to its history, including, most recently, the construction of signature buildings and landscapes that have transformed the campus. These projects have received national attention and are exemplary in how they incorporate contemporary attitudes and trends in campus planning and design.

The campus and its buildings and landscapes cannot be frozen in time. A familiar axiom tells us that change is the world’s only constant. As is true anywhere on Earth, change will continue at the University of Cincinnati. This Campus Heritage Plan will help guide future change at UC as it relates to the university’s historic and signature buildings and landscapes. This chapter describes the underlying principles for accommodating change where buildings and landscapes are considered significant and worthy of a preservation ethic. The chapters that follow will apply these principles in their recommended treatments for specific buildings and landscape areas.
The Evolving Master Plan

To provide context for a preservation strategy, it is helpful to recall some of the decisions made in the years leading up to the *University of Cincinnati Master Plan 2000*. The year 1948 was seminal in the evolution of the University of Cincinnati campus. In that year, old McMicken Hall was torn down, and salvaged bricks were used to build a new McMicken Hall on the footprint of the former building. Old McMicken, built in 1895, was the first campus building to be established on the ridge at Burnet Woods. The new McMicken Hall, designed in a traditional neo-Georgian style by longtime university architect Henry Hake, clearly marked the end of an old era rather than heralding the beginning of a new one.

Between 1895 and 1948, campus planning and design at UC was representative of the Picturesque and Beaux Arts traditions. The Picturesque is seen in the original siting of McMicken Hall and its two wings on the ridge of Burnet Woods, an urban city park originally envisioned with curving roadways and naturalistic landscaping in the Olmsted park tradition. The later siting of Baldwin Quad on a subsidiary ridgeline, at an angle to McMicken, and the siting of the early athletic field (now Nippert Stadium) and Schmidlapp Gymnasium (now the Dieterle Center) in a ravine, also at an angle to McMicken, are remaining examples of the Picturesque’s influence in planning the early campus to work with natural topographic conditions. Today’s roadway on the north edge of McMicken Commons, which curves around the south of Baldwin Quad into what is now MainStreet, is a remaining trace of the original park road system. These features faintly echo the earliest period of the campus’s evolution while continuing to influence its current identity, in that the key orientations and alignments they established would become the “force fields” of the current master plan.
The university’s Beaux Arts tradition can be seen today in the courtyard form of Baldwin Quad and in the other early 20th century buildings still existing along Clifton Avenue. Memorial Hall, the original portion of Tangeman University Center, and Nippert Stadium also remain from this period. The grid of the city street pattern that extends into the campus from Jefferson Avenue is the only remaining echo of a neighborhood of residential houses that existed on the east side of the campus into the early 1960s.

The University of Cincinnati’s early history ended with the aforementioned reconstruction of McMicken Hall, in 1948. The year 1952 saw the construction of UC’s first modern facility, the Alms Building. The movement from McMicken’s neo-Georgian to Alms’ modern style marked a significant change. Although the campus landscape as a whole did not change radically until the early 1960s, a new era had begun.

As discussed in Chapter 2, radical change occurred between 1964 and 1989, ushered in by enormous growth, the transformation of the university into a nationally ranked research institution, and the reshaping of the modest and traditional early campus into a dense urban complex. This period of growth was important in university history, although it resulted in a campus landscape that the university would seek to reshape in later years.

Although two high-rise residential buildings from this period have been demolished, numerous other modern buildings from the period remain and still actively contribute to university life. The design and functional qualities of these buildings vary; some are handsome examples of their type. Care should be taken not to dismiss these buildings simply because they were created during a difficult period in the university’s physical evolution or because modern buildings of the 1960s and 1970s are currently being
reviewed for preservation. When contemplating the future, university planners should apply to these modern buildings the same careful process of thought and analysis that was followed with earlier university buildings now considered historic.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the University of Cincinnati Master Plan 2000, which was adopted in 1991 and became fully developed in 2000, brought a unifying vision to the campus and laid the groundwork for a landscape that is still evolving today. Compared to the haphazard and somewhat forbidding urban sprawl that existed in 1990, the campus today is a pleasing and stimulating place, largely because of the master plan. Add to this the national recognition that UC has received for its expression of contemporary thought and design, and the master plan becomes a significant work in the body of campus planning literature.

The University of Cincinnati Master Plan 2000 is an established document, the product of more than a decade of thought and evaluation. While it has contributed to a unifying vision for the campus, it should never become static; rather, it should be the blueprint for continued evolution. The philosophical design concepts underlying the master plan encourage movement and dynamic relationships between outdoor spaces and the buildings that help define them. The master plan’s concepts of pedestrian and vehicle accessibility, clear lines of connection between important places, and positive open spaces that unify buildings and landscapes while also providing variety will remain as underpinnings of campus planning and design at the university. These design concepts are distinct, however, from the execution of the specific landscape and building designs that have been implemented within the master plan’s conceptual framework. The master plan should continue to be the inspiration and guideline for the continued evolution of the university campus. However, it should never hinder continued reevaluation or ongoing change, lest the campus become stagnant.

With this in mind, the master plan should be viewed as an evolving document, to be periodically and regularly updated. Underlying concepts and the physical recommendations to which they lead should be adjusted, adapted, and revised in a way that respects the concepts and processes of the plan but also takes in new information through observation, experience, and reflection. Designs that have been implemented within
the plan’s framework should, likewise, be monitored and evaluated. Information about how well buildings and landscapes have succeeded in addressing the programs they were intended to fulfill, as well as whether they have been successful in implementing concepts and goals of the master plan, should feed into the process of adjustment and adaptation. This Campus Heritage Plan describes one step in that process.

Buildings and features predating 1948 should be considered historically significant and treated as historic resources. In general, the university’s historic buildings have been well maintained and respectfully treated, although some, such as Wilson Auditorium and the University YMCA, are awaiting appropriate reuse. Buildings and features dating from the university’s modern period, 1948 through 1990, should be treated with care on a case-by-case basis so that buildings and features that may later be considered significant are given a fair assessment. Buildings such as Alms, Rhodes, and Baldwin may be valued for the quality of their design. A building such as Crosley Tower, although monolithic, may be valued as a local landmark.

Many of the buildings and landscapes constructed at the university over the past 27 years were designed by recognized contemporary masters and may themselves be considered masterworks. This plan recommends that the signature buildings and landscapes constructed since the adoption of the master plan in 1991 be considered contemporary works of art that may be of national and local historical significance. Great care should be exercised in undertaking changes to these buildings and landscapes, and they should be treated as though they have been determined to be historically and architecturally significant, as indeed they probably are.

Recognizing that changes are inevitable, the process for addressing change (including ongoing maintenance) should be similar to that used for historic buildings and landscapes. This process will use the recommendations of historic preservation, including the defined preservation treatments applicable to historic resources and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, which serve as design guidelines for applying appropriate preservation treatments. Both preservation treatments and the Secretary’s Standards are discussed below. All these resources will benefit by addressing potential future change through a historic preservation perspective.
The University of Cincinnati campus has undergone major change since the early 1960s. To some, buildings from the university’s modern period, 1964 through 1989, have massive institutional personae that lack the appeal and sentiment of ivy-covered neo-Georgian halls. Alumni who attended the university in the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s (the current pool of potential donors) recall urban high-rise buildings set amid a sea of parking lots. Today, rather than relying solely upon historic buildings and picturesque landscapes, the university’s image draws instead upon the dynamic contemporary artistic character of the signature buildings and landscapes that now dominate the campus.

Now that the frenetic building campaign of the past 15 years has come to a pause, UC’s current image is the one it will carry for the indefinite future. That image consists of (a) remaining historic buildings, (b) remaining modern buildings, (c) recent signature buildings, and (d) the campus landscape that attempts to weave them all together. These elements now are mostly in balance, and the job in the coming years is to fill in, enhance, fine-tune, and correct problems.

A real danger to these contemporary “signature” works of architecture, which seem so intellectually aggressive, dynamic, fresh, stimulating, and curious to many people today, is that they may seem dated in 10 to 20 years. Many architectural and landscape design styles experience a period of decline in appreciation as tastes change. The buildings of the 1960s and 1970s are in this period now. Buildings and landscapes of the early 20th century that are now considered historically significant went through a similar period of disfavor in the 1950s and ’60s. Buildings going through this period face a greater risk of being taken for granted, inappropriately altered, neglected, or lost. As they emerge from such periods, they can be rediscovered, viewed with fresh eyes, and appreciated again. The Campus Heritage Plan stresses the importance of the signature buildings and landscapes and can be used to help mitigate any potential period of disfavor, if future university administrators follow its recommended process for appropriately accommodating change.

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Image and the Agents of Change

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One key issue with the signature buildings and landscapes is maintenance. These buildings and landscapes were expensive and cutting-edge. In some cases they were constructed with new materials and complex assemblies, the maintenance characteristics and life cycles of which may
not yet be known. As a result, maintenance needs may be intensive and relatively costly. As with historic buildings, inappropriate maintenance for these materials and systems could lead directly to even more costly problems in the future. The issue of maintenance and sustainability needs to be studied individually, with the goal of reducing costs and increasing lifespan while preserving building and landscape character. Issues related to maintenance are outlined by resource in Chapters 5 and 6.

Issues have also arisen regarding how the signature buildings and landscape fulfill the programs for which they were intended and about the usability of some of the spaces. The university cannot afford to have spaces and facilities that do not serve their intended programmatic purpose. Again, these issues must be examined on a case-by-case basis, and interventions must be crafted that preserve building and landscape character while addressing needs. These issues are also discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Agents of change at UC can be summarized in five broad categories, most of which have been mentioned previously:

- Changes in use influenced by growth, expansion, and the introduction of new programs;
- Changes in programs that cause existing facilities to no longer be adequate, such as changes influenced by technology, teaching methods, research needs, user expectations, required support facilities, and building systems;
- Lack of appreciation due to changes in taste, leading to inappropriate alterations, neglect, or loss;
- Maintenance issues that are addressed using inappropriate techniques that damage existing materials, compromise existing systems, and/or alter appearance; and
- Buildings or spaces that do not work for their intended use.

The following preservation treatments, guidelines, principles, and processes for decision-making are intended to help the university accommodate change while preserving and enhancing the existing character of its buildings and landscapes.
Preservation Treatments

The historic preservation field uses a variety of terms to describe treatments that may be applied to historic preservation. Although many of these terms are used loosely in discussions about historic buildings, they have specific meanings. Four key terms are generally used to describe the treatment of historic buildings and landscapes: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

Of these four terms, Preservation treatment requires retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric, features, and materials. Rehabilitation treatment acknowledges the need to alter or add to a property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining historic character. Restoration allows for an accurate depiction of the property’s appearance at a particular time in its history. Reconstruction establishes a framework for re-creating vanished historic elements with new materials.

In planning for changes to UC’s historic and signature buildings and landscapes, Preservation and Rehabilitation are the most appropriate and applicable treatments for consideration and use. These terms have been applied in recommending overall treatment approaches to individual buildings and landscape character areas in subsequent chapters of the Campus Heritage Plan. The protection, maintenance, and repair of historic resources should always be a priority and should precede other considerations related to intervention. Appropriate treatments for individual buildings, landscapes, features, and management zones should be identified consistent with the recommendations included in these guidelines when projects are in the early planning stages. How this should be accomplished is outlined below in the chapter section titled “Process for Accommodating Change.” Subsequent chapters provide further information on treatment on an individual basis.
Preservation
Preservation is defined as the process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize features, generally focuses on the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features. Removals, extensive replacement, alterations, and new additions are not appropriate. Preservation stresses protection, repair, and maintenance. Preservation should be the baseline treatment for buildings and landscapes that are too significant and important to change.

Rehabilitation
Rehabilitation is defined as the process of creating a compatible use in a historic property through carefully planned minimal alterations and compatible additions. Often referred to as adaptive reuse, Rehabilitation protects and preserves the historic features, materials, elements, and spatial relationships that convey historical, cultural, and architectural values. In this context, new, expanded, or upgraded facilities should be designed to avoid impacts to character-defining historic elements. They should also be constructed of compatible materials. Retention of original historic fabric should be the primary consideration in undertaking a program of rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Rehabilitation accommodates needed change and is the most appropriate treatment for most buildings and landscapes at UC.

Restoration
Restoration refers to returning a resource to its appearance at a specific previous period in its history. Restoration is the process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular time removing features from other periods in its history and reconstructing missing features from the desired period. In this context, historic plans, documents, and photographs should be used to guide the work. Limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, as well as code-related work to make a property functional, are all appropriate within a restoration project. It is unlikely that restoration will be a treatment used for projects at UC except for possible isolated, special circumstances.

Reconstruction
Reconstruction is defined as the process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a non-surviving historic property using new construction for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its original location. A reconstruction is a new resource made to replace an historic resource that has been lost. Reconstruction is not anticipated to be relevant to future projects at the university.

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards
The philosophy behind the recommendations in this plan is based on a set of federal guidelines entitled The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Commonly called the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, they were established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to provide national benchmarks for the treatment of historic resources. An individual set of standards and guidelines was developed for each of the four commonly identified historic preservation
treatments noted above: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. They were developed to ensure that policies toward historic resources were applied uniformly, even if the end result was different in every case. In the language of community planners, these standards are a list of “best practices” for historic preservation. The standards are often included in preservation plans, ordinances, and regulations that govern activities affecting local historic districts. All federally funded and permitted activities affecting historic resources are evaluated with respect to these standards.

Because of their wisdom, flexibility, and usefulness, the Secretary’s Standards are also widely used throughout the field of historic preservation to aid property owners, designers, and preservation professionals in making good decisions affecting their historic buildings and landscapes. They ensure that important issues about the care of historic buildings and landscapes are not forgotten in the process of making decisions about other issues. When these guidelines are used in the context of a new project involving a historic building, they provide a starting point for the discussion of proposed changes to the building’s historic character and fabric.

Because Rehabilitation is the most appropriate preservation treatment where extensive changes are anticipated to meet changing programmatic needs, the Secretary’s Standards for Rehabilitation have been used in this Campus Heritage Plan as the basis for recommended treatments for UC’s historic and signature buildings and landscapes.

The durability of the Standards is testimony not only to their soundness, but also to the flexibility of their language. They provide a philosophy and a sensitive approach to assessing changes and problem-solving for those involved in managing the treatment of historic buildings, rather than a set of solutions to specific design issues. Following a balanced, reasonable, and disciplined process is often more important than the exact nature of the treatment option that is chosen. Instead of predetermining an outcome in favor of retaining or recreating historic features, the Standards ensure that all the critical issues are considered. The Standards are also useful in consideration of the construction of new buildings in an historic context and the alteration of older buildings as necessary for reuse, safety, accessi-
bility, or maintenance. As with any public policy issue, the public interest in preserving historic buildings and landscapes must be balanced with other public interests.


The 10 standards that make up The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are quoted in full below, followed by a brief discussion of the implications of each.

**Standard 1 – A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.**

Standard 1 recommends compatible use in the context of adaptive reuse and changes to historic buildings and landscapes. This standard encourages owners and managers to find uses that retain and enhance historic character, not detract from it. For example, the work involved in reuse projects should be carefully planned to minimize impacts on historic features, materials, and spaces. The destruction of character-defining features should be avoided.

**Standard 2 – The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.**

Standard 2 recommends the retention and preservation of character-defining features. It emphasizes the importance of preserving integrity and as much existing historic fabric as possible. Alterations that repair or modify existing historic fabric are preferable to those that require total removal.

**Standard 3 – Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.**
Standard 3 focuses on authenticity and discourages the conjectural restoration of an entire property, feature, or design. It also discourages combining and/or grafting historic features and elements from different properties, and constructing new buildings that appear to be historic. Literal restoration to a historic appearance should be undertaken only when detailed documentation is available and when the significance of the resource warrants restoration. Reconstruction of lost features should not be attempted without adequate documentation.

**Standard 4 – Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.**

Standard 4 recognizes that buildings change, and that many of these changes contribute to a building’s historical significance. Understanding a building’s history and development is just as important as understanding its original design, appearance, and function. This point should be kept in mind when considering treatments for buildings that have undergone many changes. Most historic buildings contain a visual record of their own evolution. This evolution can be identified, and changes that are significant to the history of the building should be retained. The opportunity to compare multiple periods of time in the same building lends interest to the structure and helps communicate changes that have occurred within the larger landscape and community context.

**Standard 5 – Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.**

Standard 5 recommends preserving the distinctive historic components of a building or landscape that represent its historic character. Workmanship, materials, methods of construction, floor plans, and both ornate and typical details should be identified before work is undertaken.

**Standard 6 – Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.**

Standard 6 encourages property owners to repair historic character-defining features instead of replacing them when historic features are deteriorated. In cases where deterioration makes replacement necessary, new features should closely match historic conditions in all respects. Property owners are urged to document existing conditions with photography and notes before any features are altered or removed. These records assist future choices that are appropriate to the property’s historic character.

**Standard 7 – Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.**

Standard 7 warns against using chemical and physical treatments that can permanently damage historic features. Many commercially available
treatments are irreversibly damaging. Sandblasting and harsh chemical cleaning, in particular, are extremely harmful to wood and masonry surfaces because they destroy the material’s basic physical properties and speed deterioration. Potential treatments for UC’s signature buildings should be carefully considered in this regard. Some of the materials used in the buildings are new, and it is not known how they will weather over time. Potential maintenance treatments should not alter or damage these new materials.

**Standard 8** – Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

Standard 8 addresses the importance of below-ground prehistoric and historic features. This issue is paramount when a construction project involves excavation. An assessment of a site’s archeological potential is recommended before work is undertaken. If archeological resources are found, some type of mitigation may be required. Solutions should be developed that minimize the need for excavation of previously unexcavated sites.

**Standard 9** – New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

**Standard 10** – New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Standards 9 and 10 are linked by issues of the compatibility and reversibility of additions, alterations, and new construction. Both standards are intended to (a) minimize the damage to historic fabric caused by building additions, and (b) ensure that new work will be different from, but compatible with, existing historic conditions. The level of craftsmanship, detailing, and quality of materials should be appropriate to the significance of the resource. Following these standards will help to protect a building’s historic integrity.

The basic premise of the Secretary’s Standards is that historic resources are more than objects of aesthetic merit; they are repositories of historical information. The Standards provide a framework for evaluating preservation activities and emphasize preservation of historic fabric, honesty of historical expression, and reversibility.

**Principles for Accommodating Change at UC**

The philosophy behind the University of Cincinnati Campus Heritage Plan is that a historic preservation approach is appropriate to both UC’s historic and signature buildings and landscapes, and that a preservation ethic of stewardship contributes to a viable, healthy campus by preserving and strengthening character and by accommodating change in a sensitive manner. When character defining building and landscape elements are identified and preserved, the campus is enhanced as a significant and
distinctive place. Continued education of students, faculty, staff, and visitors regarding the history and significance of the university and its buildings and landscapes is important in generating appreciation and support for the appropriate treatment of its resources. Appropriate maintenance is vital to the conservation of character-defining building and landscape elements. Flexibility in planning and design is the key to developing solutions for changing needs that will last for a long time to come.

Thus, the general principles of this preservation approach encourage and facilitate the long-term preservation of character-defining buildings and landscapes, and are based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, which should be considered in planning maintenance, reuse, renovations, new construction, and other future work on UC campuses:

- Continue to use a property as it was designed to be used, or find a new use that minimizes necessary changes to character-defining features.
- Identify and retain distinguishing building and landscape qualities and characteristics.
- Maintain, protect, and repair existing character-defining features, materials, and finishes. If features are deteriorated beyond repair, replace in kind.
- Be authentic: if a feature is missing or must be removed, use accurate documentation to guide replacement.
- Respect the evolution of historic changes, fashion, taste, and use.
- Do not use maintenance methods or materials that damage significant building and landscape fabric.
Where needed changes require new construction:

- Respect the evolving master plan.
- Follow an established design review process.
- Accommodate the needed program to the maximum extent possible without destroying the character of the existing resource.
- Understand that change will continue to occur.
- Respect the existing built context.
- Maintain a high quality of design and craftsmanship.
- Take a humanist approach — design places where people want to be.
- Take a sustainable approach — be responsible to society and the environment.
- Where change is necessary, existing university buildings offer opportunities for creative new uses. Often found with multiple layers of history and aesthetics, existing buildings can inspire creative and compatible designs for new construction.
- New construction should not destroy character-defining building or landscape features or materials.
- Additions and alterations to historic or signature buildings and landscapes should speak of their own time but should be compatible with the character of the existing resource.

Management Issues

Finally, any preservation approach will necessarily intersect the current, very specific management issues, concerns, and objectives of the University of Cincinnati from which the impulse for change will arise. These are the “backstory” of the setting within which change agents interact and through which the preservation principles recommended in this plan will be applied. All decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. When the Secretary’s Standards are carefully and consistently applied, they meet the test of common sense.
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