

August 27, 2009

Mr. Al Martin  
City of Madison Planning Division and the  
Urban Design Commission

Dear Mr. Martin and Urban Design Commissioners:

I am writing with great concern about the plan to expand the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am a faculty member in the Folklore Program (College of Letters and Sciences) and the Department of Landscape Architecture, where I teach courses on cultural landscapes and preservation and use campus landscapes as examples and laboratory settings. I count several Human Ecology faculty as close colleagues, enjoy student design and other programming in Human Ecology's Design Gallery, and have been looking forward to enhanced exhibit and textile collections spaces. But my students, project assistants, and I are regular inhabitants of Agricultural Hall, where our work spaces lie in the basement, on the east side of the building that will be most affected by the proposed expansion.

The Human Ecology expansion as presently construed is problematic for several reasons:

1. First and foremost, its footprint, massing, and required surrounding space for ADA and fire compliance, are too monumental for the site. They fill in most of the open and green space between the old Human Ecology building and Agricultural Hall, and the height will rise well above the crest of Observatory Hill. They will significantly alter the view of, and from, the newly restored Observatory, unfavorably re-route a key mid-hill east-west pedestrian passageway, and crowd neighboring Agricultural Hall, affecting customary access by foot and car, and natural light into the basement design area.

When the design process for this expansion began in 2001, the anticipated footprint was 70,000 square feet, two-thirds the present size of 100,000 square feet, as most recently reported in the Wisconsin State Journal—and this volume does not count the exterior space required around the building to meet Madison building codes. The smaller figure and design concept passed the faculty review process some years ago, but would a design half again as massive meet with approval now?

2. Second, the proposed new construction appropriates and destroys the O.C. Simonds designed eastern extent of Agricultural Hall's National Register site, which provides an effectively navigable, green and open space with mature trees and heirloom plantings—a pleasurable aesthetic for pedestrians in particular, a landscape that reflects campus history, and an important design feature of Agricultural Hall itself. The plan thus steals from and diminishes Agricultural Hall to enhance Human Ecology, violates the sanctity of a nationally recognized historic site's boundary, and undermines historic preservation guidelines in designing around a historic site.

3. The excavations for the monumental structure remove the remaining natural contours of the land between Agricultural Hall and the old Human Ecology building, and between the crest of Observatory Hill and Linden Drive. The university's continued assault on Observatory Hill is particularly upsetting, as this important geological and geographical feature makes Madison itself distinctive, the area routinely draws locals and visitors from afar for sight-seeing,

recreation, and picnicking, and its patchwork of landscapes reveals the area's unique history and cultural make-up.

4. The massive structure to be installed will provide little relief from the increasing human-made hardscape in the area; pedestrians will have to pass through or around it, experiencing new wind tunnels on the exterior. New plantings will be different in character and not achieve maturity for decades. Along Linden, pedestrians will have to beware of vehicles emerging from the new underground parking tunnel, and brave more traffic than what already bedevils Linden Drive sidewalks. The attraction of more vehicular traffic to Linden Drive, especially from off-campus, and in light of the university's perpetual disarray of building and road construction, seems counterintuitive—and it contradicts the university's 2005 Master Plan to privilege pedestrian traffic on the "Greater Mall."

5. The university's planning and design process has not adequately sought contributions from the greater neighborhood of campus units surrounding the proposed expansion, nor of entities and specialists across and off campus that are concerned with the protection of historic and cultural landscapes in the area. Much of the planning and plotting has transpired clandestinely. The 2001 public planning document has not been distributed widely nor is it easy to come by. The 2005 summary of it proposes a concept, a smaller volume, and acknowledges the likelihood of a range of compromise solutions. By the time neighboring Agricultural Hall faculty were alerted to opportunities to contribute to the process, three more years had passed and significant aspects of the project were already unchangeable. As the process has proceeded since Fall 2008, planning personnel have more regularly invited the public to reviews of the building plans, but our concerns have most often been met with minds already made up. In other words, at a time when those on campus who really care what happens to university spaces could have made a difference, their input was selectively not sought.

A continued disregard for the integrity and importance of Observatory Hill, for area and campus history, for landscape architecture that works well already as pedestrian-friendly open and green space, and for collective and collegial problem-solving, has characterized this process.

I urge you to encourage university planners to downsize and rethink the character of yet one more deconstruction and construction project that promises such unmitigated disruption to Madison's and the campus's quality of life.

Sincerely yours,

Janet C. Gilmore  
Assistant Professor  
Folklore Program and Department of Landscape Architecture  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Agricultural Hall, 1450 Linden Drive  
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

August 27, 2009

Memorandum:

To: Al Martin & Madison Urban Design Commission

From: Prof. Emeritus Arnold R. Alanen, Honorary ASLA

Subject: Comments on cultural landscape impacts of SoHE project proposal

I am sorry to miss the UDC meeting, but a prior commitment has taken me 400 miles from Madison. I wish to begin by saying that my observations recognize the future development of the UW-Madison will result in the utilization of some areas of landscape and open space for buildings, parking ramps and lots, roads and walkways, and other forms of infrastructure. As such, the School of Human Ecology (SoHE) is to be applauded for acquiring funds that can be used to enhance its programs and facilities. Virtually every college and department on campus would hope to be so successful in its own fund-raising efforts.

I must emphasize that the following comments are in no way meant to jettison the SoHE project. Nevertheless, as a UW-Madison citizen I find it necessary to point out that even though the project proposal and design pose several problems, of greatest concern to me is the loss of a very important landscape that stretches to the southeast from Agriculture Hall, a feature that has been part of the campus for 110 years. It is the second oldest designed landscape on campus; only Bascom Mall predates it. Furthermore, this landscape is associated with O.C. Simonds, one of the nation's most important late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century landscape architects, and one of thirteen founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899. (Refer to the overall campus map, from the 2005 Master Plan, for the locations of Ag Hall, SoHE, and the landscape between these buildings and Linden Dr.) The current proposal calls for the introduction of an underground parking facility, with an entrance that cuts directly through this landscape. It will destroy what Wm. Henry, the first Dean of the College of Agriculture, described as the "extended beautiful stretch of sward and shrubbery" along Linden Drive. Shortly thereafter, the 1908 Laird & Cret campus plan called for the conversion of Linden Drive into a "Greater Mall"; and every subsequent campus plan has echoed this proposal, including the 2005 version.

These comments are written from the perspective of someone who, between 1974 and 2009, spent almost 35 years as a UW-Madison faculty member. During this time I developed a very strong attachment to the university and its campus setting, and regularly used the landscape as an instructional tool when teaching classes in landscape history and historic preservation to several thousand students. In addition, from 2003-06 I supervised the history section of a campus landscape documentation and preservation project that was funded by a grant from the J. Paul Getty Trust of Los Angeles. Because of its unique landscape-related resources, the UW-Madison was included in the first group of American campuses that received such a grant. It was clear from the Getty review process that the UW-Madison campus landscape is not only an important university resource: it also has city, state, national, and even international significance.

While there will be an inevitable loss of campus landscape fabric over subsequent years and decades, some places are so important—whether for aesthetic, historical, ecological, or other reasons—that they merit special attention, consideration, and preservation. Virtually all of these places have meaning as **cultural landscapes** since they represent a continuum of the aspirations, decisions, interactions, and stories that are associated with previous, current, and future residents of the campus. What cultural landscapes do, more so than any other aspect of the built environment, is provide **context and continuity**. Many of the most important cultural landscapes on the UW-Madison have been designed specifically to provide context—that is, they enhance and emphasize the architectural features and qualities of buildings and structures; and they offer meaningful and pleasing outdoor experiences for the students, staff, faculty, and visitors who reside, study, learn, work, and recreate there. Cultural landscapes also offer continuity; they quite literally tie the campus "neighborhoods" together so that the entire complex is something more than the sum of its parts, and they also serve as reference points that link generations of students and alumni to one another.

Although I have a great concern for the integrity and importance of the UW-Madison campus, it is important to note that most of my views are also reflected in the 2005 Master Plan, which was approved after an extensive series of public meetings were conducted on campus. For reasons of brevity I will allow the Master Plan to speak for itself, and have highlighted key terms and phrases. Three maps and several photographic images provide further background information.

Process & Observations: The campus must “be **grounded in [its] history**,” and “**respect the inherent beauty of [its] setting**.”

Enhance Experience of Place: “The plan should promote **a clear sense of place** [and] **respect the history** and diversity of the university . . . The plan should commit to the **historic preservation of key buildings and open spaces** that make this place a stimulating learning environment.”

Protecting Our Environment: “The University’s **environmental ethic** is found throughout its history from early ties to John Muir and Aldo Leopold’s land ethic to noted landscape architect Jens Jensen.” (Note O.C. Simonds and Jens Jensen were contemporaries, both based in Chicago at the time, and identified as the founders of the Prairie Style of landscape architecture.) “We will continue that tradition . . . by **reducing our impact on the land**.”

Buildings: “The **massing, scale, and character of campus buildings are crucial to good open space development** and contribute to a strong sense of identity. . . A great campus such as the UW-Madison is most memorable and vibrant due to the **balance between its buildings and open spaces**.”

Open Space: “The natural areas, **historic landscapes and public spaces . . . create astounding first impressions and lasting memories** for those who visit, work, and learn at this institution. . . **Open spaces are essential to the quality of the university environment**.”

Cultural Landscapes: “**Cultural landscapes . . . [are] outdoor places where stories related to past activities can bring the history of these places to life for people. . . [these] spaces across campus provide a great sense of culture and history**.”

Master Plan Goals—Open Space: “**Protect and enhance existing open spaces** and create new gathering areas . . . **Protect and enhance known historic cultural landscapes**, quadrangles and courtyards.”

Travel Around Campus: “Many . . . elements of the plan focus on improvements to pedestrian circulation. The centerpiece of these improvements is the phased **conversion of Linden Drive to a pedestrian corridor with very limited vehicle access**. (Note: refer to #2 in the “Transportation Diagram.”)

Priorities for Planning and Development: “Redevelop the Linden Drive corridor, re-establishing the ‘**Greater Mall**’ **open space concept and pedestrian features**.” (Note: refer to #13 on “Open Space Systems at UW-Madison.”)

**In summary, the proposed project has ignored many cultural landscape and open space objectives that are expressed in its own Master Plan.**

Dear Members of the Madison Urban Design Commission:

I am sorry that my schedule does not permit me to attend this meeting in person. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the following written summary of my comments regarding the proposed School of Human Ecology (SoHE) Project for the UW-Madison campus.

I strongly support the efforts of the School of Human Ecology to modernize and expand their facilities in order to better support their teaching and research programs. However, I have many reservations about the current design.

- The proposed solution is an example of the unfortunate outcome resulting from focusing on buildings and the needs of one program unit, and ignoring and/or dismissing both the contemporary and historical context of a neighborhood, and the needs and values of the users of a space, once common to all and about to be largely appropriated for one group.
- Although the design team has, in recent months been paying close attention to the landscape around the proposed additions, the public face of the project has been all about the buildings. This is exemplified by the graphical visualizations prepared by the designers for public view. The images present the buildings out of context, with many of the renderings failing to show the slope of the hill and the nature of the alley-way that will be created between the proposed pre-school lab and the east entrance to Ag Hall—an entrance that has served as a main entrance to the building for many visitors, both historically and at present.
- The proposal will have the effect of redefining the nature of the Linden Drive/Observatory Hill neighborhood as described in the most recent Campus Master Plan, and does so without having consulted the occupants of neighboring buildings early enough in the design process for their comments to have influenced the building and infrastructure footprints.

Among the consequences of the current design that will negatively affect the 2005 Master Plan recommendations are:

1. Failure to protect a significant cultural landscape and to plan this new development within the framework of a cultural landscape: Goal #5
2. Failure to protect and enhance an existing open space: Goal #5
3. Inviting more vehicular traffic to Linden Drive by expanding the pre-school lab and creating more parking, rather than reducing such traffic in order to promote a more pedestrian friendly experience

The project removes the last remnant of the romantic landscape that was designed by the eminent landscape architect O.C. Simonds at the request of

Dean William Henry. This landscape is an important part of the Landscape Architecture teaching program, as it allows students to experience a space representing an important era in design. It also contains mature specimen shrubs and trees not found elsewhere on campus. The proposal violates the boundary that was included in the nomination of Agriculture Hall to the National Register of Historic Places.

The building additions create a footprint that is too massive for the site and which visually as well as physically impacts both the existing buildings and regional landscape. The building complex is large and sprawling and reduces the prominence of Ag Hall (one might say it crowds Ag Hall), the symbolic home of CALS (having Ag Hall serve as a prominent focal point was an intended planning objective for the west campus). The proximity of the proposed pre-school playground reduces surface vehicular delivery access to Ag Hall, a situation which will make it more difficult for students and faculty to move design boards and other bulky materials in and out of our facility. The design will also inconvenience Ag Hall residents because of the noise that will come from the playground, situated only a few feet away from offices and at least one classroom space.

I supported the School of Human Ecology in its efforts to expand and approve its facilities since members of our department first became aware of the project in 2000 or 2001. Unfortunately, the modifications in the project that developed since the general concept was presented in the 2005 Campus Master Plan (a plan that was approved after extensive public discussions across campus) have not been subjected to similar thoughtful and open discussions. We were not given an opportunity to discuss the implications of any specific design in order to provide input into what features of the existing site are important to our department, until the project managers had become vested in a particular solution. Sadly, that solution will have a lasting impact on the legacy of the campus.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Evelyn A. Howell  
Professor and Chair  
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UW-Madison

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Upper extent of garage entrance posted.



Upper extent of garage entrance posted.



Upper extent of garage entrance in orange. Garage entrance will extend 8' above land surface at this point.



Vegetation to be removed by garage entrance.



Upper extent of garage entrance in orange.



Landscape slated for garage excavation.



Upper extent of garage entrance; hackberry will go.



Garage entrance on Linden Drive will occur at opening.



Garage entrance to occur right of tree lilacs at left.



Linden Drive to east, proximate to garage ent.



Linden Dr. walkway to east by garage entrance.



Linden Dr. to west by garage entrance.

Several Campus master plans including the 2005 recommend a phased conversion of Linden Drive to a pedestrian corridor with very limited vehicle access.



Orange marks at right showing western edge of SoHE addition; a planter will also extend about 6 feet to the left of the line.



Post showing southwestern corner of addition. Fire lane to extend between addition and Ag Hall.



Fire lane will extend from here to rear of addition.



Western extent of addition, in orange, looking north.



Area for fire lane between Ag Hall and addition.



OPEN SPACE SYSTEMS AT UW-MADISON

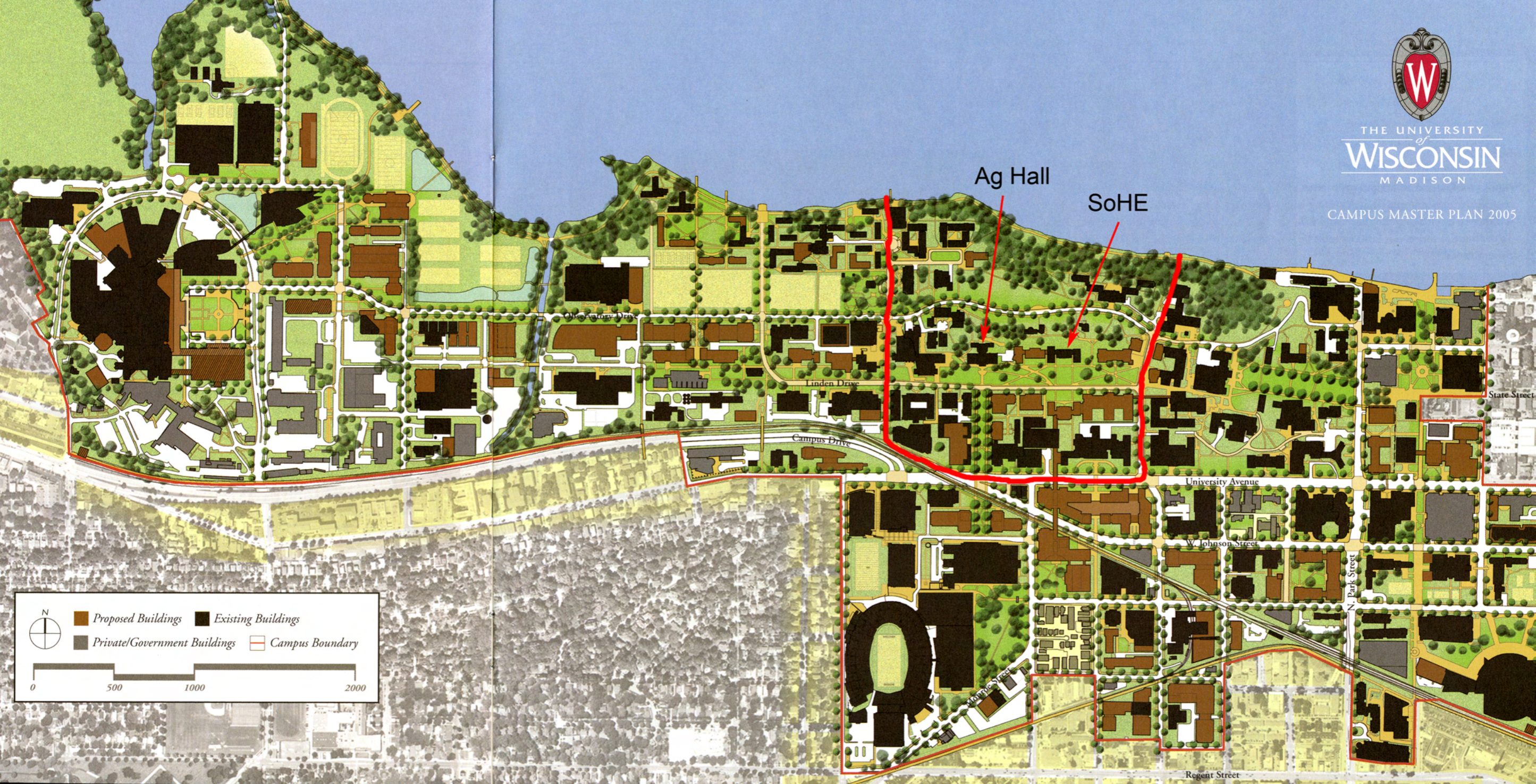


- 1. *Class of 1918 Marsh*
- 2. *Eagle Heights Community Gardens*
- 3. *Picnic Point*
- 4. *Frautschi Point*
- 5. *Willow Creek*
- 6. *Temin Lakeshore Path*
- 7. *Henry Mall*
- 8. *Muir Woods*
- 9. *Bascom Hill*
- 10. *Library Mall*
- 11. *Memorial Union Terrace*
- 12. *Recreation Fields*
- 13. *Linden Drive Mall*



THE UNIVERSITY  
of  
**WISCONSIN**  
MADISON

CAMPUS MASTER PLAN 2005



Ag Hall

SoHE

**Legend:**

- Proposed Buildings (Brown square)
- Existing Buildings (Black square)
- Private/Government Buildings (Grey square)
- Campus Boundary (Red outline)

**Scale:** 0, 500, 1000, 2000

**North Arrow:** N

# TRANSPORTATION DIAGRAM

