

# LAND USE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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# INTRODUCTION

## A Context for Campus Planning at Swarthmore

The principles and values in this document were first articulated during the North Campus planning process in the early 1990s, reinforced during the planning phases for both the Unified Science Center (1999) and the new residence hall (2001), and further refined and confirmed by the College's Land Use Planning Committee (2002).

Life at Swarthmore is first and foremost an enriching intellectual experience. At the same time, the experience of living or working on campus or even just visiting can be visually and emotionally powerful. There is a feeling one gets from simply walking on campus, whether your path leads up Magill Walk under the shade of the swamp white oaks, into the woods down the stone steps of the amphitheater, or across Parrish Lawn on a sunny afternoon. It is clear to all members of the college community that Swarthmore's built and natural environments have created an extraordinary place where remarkable things happen.

Architects who visit the Campus speak of the landscape as what is most memorable. Buildings serve as a backdrop for the glorious open spaces such as Parrish Lawn, Magill Walk, Scott Amphitheater, Nason Garden, Bond Rose Garden, and Crum Woods. The outdoor rooms and gardens are too numerous to name, and each one is someone's favorite place.

Yet, what we build is critically important and where we build is imperative for the preservation of the intangible quality of the campus. How then do we as stewards of this magnificent place ensure that its grace and beauty are preserved and enhanced for the next 140 years? What lessons can we learn from the past and what principles should guide us in the future?

There have been attempts at creating a campus master plan for as long as the College has been here, yet as circumstances change, plans change. When Parrish burned for a second time in the late 19th century, Trotter Hall was relocated at "a great distance" to prevent the spread of fire in the event of another tragedy. Some fifty years ago, the athletic complex that had been planned north of Parrish was moved south of the tracks to accommodate increased enrollment. More recently, a plan that called for the demolition of Beardsley was cast aside for a plan that instead removed Parrish Annex and erected Kohlberg Hall, creating a north campus quadrangle.

The College does not have a master plan nor is what follows such a plan. There are two reasons behind this lack. First, our experience tell us that these plans grow old very quickly and once one thread is broken, the plan finds its way into someone's drawer. Plans for the future are more solidly built upon general principles than detailed drawings. Second, the College is currently committed to maintaining an enrollment just slightly above current levels. Yet, our history regarding enrollment has been remarkably consistent - an average of almost one percent a year growth over the 140 years since our founding. While we have steadfastly remained small, especially in comparison to our liberal arts colleagues, we have gotten bigger. To do long-range planning based upon a sudden reversal of this long-term trend seems unwise.

Our campus has never been as awe-inspiring as it is today. This is not just a matter of good fortune. There are certain principles that have guided most of the planning decisions. While these principles have most often been unspoken, our purpose here is to articulate these principles in one document.