NORTHLAND COLLEGE
CAMPUS PLANNING STRATEGY

DRAFT

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Excerpts from a campus photo documentation exercise, done by an “Ecology for Public Spaces” class as part of the fall 2001 research for this project, are included in the document. The photos and students’ comments are valuable for their insights on campus daily experience.

A full record of the photography project and other fall 2001 campus planning sessions is available online, along with this Strategy document, at [http://ruraldesign.coafes.umn.edu/northland.htm](http://ruraldesign.coafes.umn.edu/northland.htm)

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# Table of Contents

- **Introduction** 01
- The Green Campus Vision 02
- Guiding Principles 02
- Key Plan Elements and Policies 05
  - 1. Development on the Green Campus 06
  - 2. Living on Campus 08
  - 3. Campus Entry and Arrival 10
  - 4. Getting Around on the Green Campus 12
  - 5. Campus as Park: Recreation and Open Space 14
  - 6. Land Acquisition and Development 18
  - 7. Implementation Process and Projects 20
This Planning Strategy provides a framework for decision-making in the coming decades of change at Northland College. With a population expected to grow by one-fourth, to a total enrollment of 1,000 residential students in 2020, the college needs a method to make land use and development decisions that will ensure a inspiring place for learning while protecting the ecological integrity of the campus. The decision-making process itself becomes a part of the strategy, by engaging students, faculty and staff in the work of stewarding the campus.

The Guiding Principles, Plan Elements and Policies set forth here will help Northland grow and change while enhancing its identity as a “green campus.” This document offers:

- A vision of the sustainable campus
- A series of Guiding Principles that summarize and interpret the College’s Strategic Plan (2001) and Sustainability Charter (1998)
- Plan Elements and Policies on specific physical elements – buildings, open space, entryways, circulation patterns and natural systems – supported by descriptive narrative and graphics
- An implementation strategy for achieving capital investments that offers ecological and academic returns and contributes to a memorable campus image.
THE GREEN CAMPUS VISION

A campus that can grow while remaining true to its ecological principles

Northland seeks to engender pride in the people who study, work and live on the campus, and offer a clear identity to those who visit it. The environmentally responsible or “green” campus:

· realizes the full worth of natural and built campus assets;
· offers meaningful architecture and open spaces;
· is safe, attractive and integrated within its physical context; and
· supports the College’s commitment to teach and model sustainable living practices.

A green campus is above all a nurturing place, where people’s needs are met by way of minimal environmental impact, where they are motivated to excel academically and where an environmental ethic is tangible.

Our role as planners and designers is to translate broad general principles of sustainable development into site specific unique solutions, project by project, building by building, landscape by landscape, so as to encourage re-use, recycle materials, conserve water, enhance natural conditions and limit footprints.

—Cornelia Oberlander, landscape architect, 1999

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles summarize the values underlying the green campus and amplify Northland’s mission “to be the nation’s leading environmental liberal arts college” (Strategic Plan, 1997-2002, and Sustainability Charter, 1998). These 10 principles establish the basis for development and design decisions that will cumulatively create a green campus.

Guiding Principle 1:

Instill a sense of community

People find pleasure in living, working and learning on a green campus. They come to appreciate the interdependence of human and ecological systems with daily interaction with

Black willow trees by the sidewalk that leads from the mall to the Fenenga bridge. A great place to sit and read a book. How can we create other niches in the landscape? Places that are semi-secluded but not out of reach, both indoor and outdoor.
nature. On a green campus, the physical environment mirrors and facilitates these relationships and promotes a sense of community.

Guiding Principle 2:  
**Preserve natural features and connect them to the surrounding region**

Natural features at Northland — the steep topography of the ravine, the wetlands and native plant communities — all contribute to the quality of life on campus. These resources are preserved and connected to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife habitat corridors and foster links in a regional open space and recreation system.

Guiding Principle 3:  
**Create an integrated system of open and recreational spaces**

On a green campus, the mown lawn that makes up the recreation and open space system (lawn) provides opportunity for active play, quiet reflection and outdoor gatherings. Framed by the buildings, natural features and native plants, neatly maintained open space contributes to the image of a safe, welcoming, usable campus.

Guiding Principle 4:  
**Balance vehicle and pedestrian movement needs**

The central campus is reserved for pedestrians, bicycles, service vehicles and short-term parking, while remote lots accommodate long-term parking needs. Reducing the quantity of surface parking both improves the image of the campus and encourages campus-goers to walk or bike, as do attractive plantings and bicycle storage facilities.

Guiding Principle 5:  
**Maximize the existing built resources**

In keeping with Principle 2, land and buildings on the green campus are used efficiently. Existing space is renovated before new construction or additions are considered. Historic buildings in particular, which contribute so much to the campus “sense of place,” are preserved and rehabilitated. Land is also preserved. New buildings are placed within built areas to prevent sprawl and preserve natural areas on campus.

Guiding Principle 6:  
**Increase the quantity and variety of housing on campus**

A green campus offers a mix of housing types to encourage a variety of students to live on campus and thus become its...
stewards. Traditional dormitories and apartment-style town houses have their place on campus, as do alternative theme houses where small groups of students share household responsibilities and offer environmentally themed campus programs. Classes, recreation, food and retail are all within a 5-minute walking radius of residences. This both minimizes the need for cars and contributes to a “24/7” sense of safety and vitality.

Guiding Principle 7:
Ensure accessibility and a sense of safety
A green campus is safe, and its buildings and classrooms are accessible. The mix of functions — living, shopping, recreation – keep more “eyes on the street” both day and night.

Guiding Principle 8:
Promote architectural integrity
A green campus boasts high-quality architecture based on sustainable design guidelines. “Green architecture” principles guide all projects so as to minimize energy consumption and promote a conservation ethic. Buildings are considered both important elements in themselves and integral components of the campus as a whole, helping to define and shape the open space system.

Guiding Principle 9:
Make ecology visible
A green campus promotes ecological design through its architecture, landscape choices and curriculum. The same environmental stewardship principles taught in classes are practiced on the campus itself. Native plant community education and research become part of campus operation and management. Buildings and open spaces are designed to reduce landscape maintenance costs and bolster a connection to the ecology of the region.

Guiding Principle 10:
Work collaboratively
On a green campus, joint ventures and collaborative projects are encouraged in order to conserve energy and make efficient use of resources. For example, collaborations partnering with the city of Ashland or other entities on recreational or natural systems restoration leverages the College’s funds and extends the return to the campus community.
KEY PLAN ELEMENTS AND POLICIES

Key Plan Elements and Policies are recommended in this section that detail ways to implement the Campus Planning Strategy. Plan elements are illustrated in six maps with accompanying policy texts intended to guide decision-making about campus development. The plan elements and policies are informed by the Guiding Principles and incorporate findings from the workshops, meetings and site tours held on campus in fall 2001.

The full record of those planning sessions is available online, along with this draft Strategy document, at http://ruraldesign.coafes.umn.edu/projects
1. Development on the Green Campus

Development and growth offers a way for Northland College to enhance academics, increase the sense of welcome and access and create a campus that communicates its mission on a variety of levels. Development projects offer opportunities for learning what it means to build sustainability, and being part of that process.

The accompanying map, Development on the Green Campus, identified sites appropriate for future development.

Policies

1.1. The Development map identifies sites appropriate for future development.

1.2. The network of natural features, ecological plantings and stormwater meadows should be developed as shown on the Development on the Green Campus map. An open space connecting from the ravine to the mall should be preserved, that is, do not place a building in area of fine ring.

1.3. The Bay City Creek ravine, as the defining natural feature on campus, should be valued for its aesthetic and ecological importance to the campus and region. Access and views to the ravine should be improved.

1.4. New development should respect and respond to existing natural and topographic features by siting buildings sensitively, facilitating views and preserving or restoring native vegetation and wetlands, and preserve open spaces.

1.5. Development of classrooms and housing should occur first on sites within the existing campus, in order to consolidate and strengthen the central core, increase the sense of community and avoid impacting natural areas.

1.6. Consolidated residence halls and theme houses promote increased activity on campus and an enlivened sense of community.

1.7. Pedestrian bridges crossing the ravines become an integral part of the open space and trails network on campus.

1.8. Ellis Avenue between 12th and 16th Streets should be redesigned as a gateway to campus, including center...
DEVELOPMENT ON THE GREEN CAMPUS
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
Ashland, Wisconsin
median plantings, textured pavement pedestrian crossings and signage to slow traffic and signal arrival.

1.9. Campus entries are marked with a ‘welcome’ facility and monumental art commissioned from the environmental artist community.

1.10. An arrival court on the interior of campus complements the campus gateways in its sustainable design and celebration of the campus’ forest character.

1.11. Long-term parking is relocated to satellite lots outside the central campus.

1.12. Maintenance facilities and vehicle storage are consolidated east of Ellis Avenue.

2. Living on Campus

Concentrating housing on campus helps create a sense of community, as students living on campus tend to participate more in extracurricular activities and form social bonds. Additionally, student retention is likely to improve when the campus is alive after class hours. The current level of housing at Northland will not meet the expected increase in enrollment, and demand for theme houses, alternatives to dorms and townhouses, continues to exceed supply. This element of the Planning Strategy identifies a number of sites where student housing could help manifest several of the Guiding Principles.

Student Housing Concept: Village in the Woods
Policies

2.1. New housing should be developed in locations indicated on the Development map.

2.2. Dormitory housing should be built adjacent to the Memorial Hall residence.

2.3. To meet the demand for theme houses, the College should purchase and renovate neighborhood homes identified on the Land Acquisition map as they become available.

2.4. New housing is shown southeast of the campus boundary on the Development map, including three theme houses with shared common spaces to accommodate 50 students. This housing “village” concept is also adaptable to a larger site west of the ravine.

2.5. All housing should have adjacent open space—“backyards”—for informal recreational use and should provide easy access to parking, paths and the larger open space system.
3. Campus Entry and Arrival

Attractive entry and arrival spaces establish the first, and often lasting, impression of a campus. Clearly visible signs with useful campus information help make visitors feel welcome. Currently, only one sign marks entry to the Northland campus, along State Trunk Highway 13 (Ellis Avenue). There is no recognizable gateway, despite the new 16th Street entry that brings traffic to interior parking lots. Sidewalks and bicycle paths are intermittent, with no marked routes to campus.

The intent of this portion of the Planning Strategy is to enhance all entries and make clearer connections to the surrounding community. Cooperation with the City of Ashland and Wisconsin Department of Transportation is required to achieve some of these improvements.

Refer to the Campus Entry and Arrival map for details.

Policies

3.1. Campus entries and an interior arrival court should be developed as indicated on the map.

3.2. Campus entries should be clearly identifiable, employing such landscape features as native plantings, special lighting schemes and environmental art.

3.3. A landscaped boulevard should be developed along Ellis Avenue between 12th and 16th Streets to define the “front door” to campus and slow through traffic where more pedestrian crossings are planned to the new recreational fields.

3.4. Way-finding information should be clearly visible to drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.

3.5. Infill should occur on vacant sites at the entry edges of campus. In their appearance and orientation, new buildings and landscape features should signal “welcome.”

3.6. The northerly Ellis Avenue entryway should employ especially strong features, in conjunction with a Welcome Building, to indicate the campus presence.
CAMPUS ENTRY
- Main Road into Campus
- Buildings Close to Street
- Monument / Art

ARRIVAL COURT
- Monument / Art

PROMOTE TRAFFIC CALMING
- Call-Out Pedestrian Walks
- Add Center Boulevard
- Site Buildings Close to Street
- Complete Sidewalk System to Edge of Campus
- Plant Trees

LEGEND
Buildings on Street
Create a Strong Presence
4. Getting Around on the Green Campus

Most staff and faculty and more than one-third of the students live off campus. Since city transit is limited, Northland must currently accommodate up to 1,000 vehicle trips each day. Student population is growing, and an increasing number of visitors will be attracted to campus, due to the new Fine Arts and Campus centers, the Gymnasium addition and expanded outreach programs at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute. Without careful planning, traffic could become a serious detriment to campus life.

The challenge for the green campus is balancing the need to accommodate more cars with the desire for a wonderful pedestrian experience in an ecological setting. Furthermore, traffic and circulation patterns not only affect daily campus life, but recruitment and retention efforts.

This element balances various transportation modes in order to improve the quality of the campus experience. In the long term, the Planning Strategy aims to reduce parking demand on campus and offer better opportunities—and reasons—for biking and walking. The desired result: a pedestrian-first campus with a vibrant sense of community.

Policies

4.1. Parking needs should be met with the existing and proposed parking locations shown on the Getting Around on the Green Campus map.

4.2. New long-term parking should be located on the campus fringe in order to free the campus core for pedestrians, bicyclists, service vehicle access and short-term parking.

4.3. On-street parallel parking should be considered on campus before new surface lots are built, especially for short-term parking, to make fullest use of existing pavement.

4.4. New buildings should be served by underground garages to avoid expansion of surface parking.

4.5. Regular service vehicle access to buildings should be scheduled for off-peak hours, to minimize pedestrians’ encounters with the noise and smell of these large vehicles.

4.6. The College should further develop its campus-wide network of paths for pedestrians and bicyclists.

4.7. The pedestrian network should be safe and fully accessible, employing clear sightlines, adequate lighting and appropriate slopes. Efficient linear routes along with links to “outdoor rooms” will help enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage interaction.
REMOTE PARKING FOR ARTS CENTER

ARRIVAL COURT
- Bike Garage
- Short Term Parking
- Drop-off Area

GETTING AROUND ON THE GREEN CAMPUS
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
Ashland, Wisconsin
5. **Campus as Park: Recreation and Open Space**

The campus recreational system is defined by its open space and pedestrian network as much as by its formal sports facilities. This element of the Planning Strategy seeks to create a safe, attractive and connected recreational system that includes a diversity of spaces and linkages. The parts of this system include:

- recreational playing fields and sports facilities;
- the formal mall, plazas and courtyards;
- informal green spaces – the front lawns and “back yards” to buildings – and outdoor class rooms that offer delightful places for one or a few to gather;
- natural features, including the ravine, woods and wetlands;
- “living laboratory” sites for horticulture, ecology and art projects, including demonstration gardens and a plant nursery;
- a comfortable and accessible pedestrian network linking open spaces and campus facilities;
- interpretive loop trails branching off from pedestrian paths; and
- an urban boulevard along Ellis Avenue, with safe and attractive pedestrian crossings.

As the College expands its recreational playing fields east of Ellis Avenue, the number of pedestrians crossing the highway will increase, as will the numbers of vehicles turning off Ellis to the parking lots adjacent to the fields. Safe pedestrian crossings at grade will be imperative. This area offers an excellent opportunity to create a park-like setting on campus, with Ellis Avenue becoming a connecting link between open spaces.

Northland’s “campus as park” image is enhanced with native plantings that extend from the ravine at the north and western edges of campus to the wetlands across the main area of campus.

With a series of trails that extends to city streets, the campus becomes part of a regional recreational system reaching to Lake Superior.
Policies

5.1. Open space elements and interpretive trails should be developed as shown on the Campus as Park map.

5.2. Recreational facilities should be developed as shown on the Campus as Park map.

5.3. Connections to Lake Superior and the City’s trail and open space system should be developed as shown on Regional Scale Recreation and Campus as Park maps.
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
Ashland, Wisconsin

CAMPUS AS PARK

LEGEND

# Outdoor Classroom
# Frontyard
# Backyard
6. Land Acquisition and Development

The intent of this element of the Planning Strategy is to accommodate long-term development goals by first encouraging infill development within existing campus limits and, then, to clearly define future campus boundaries. New development should always be sited where it will reinforce the pedestrian experience and add to the vibrancy of the campus.

Policies

6.1. Campus infill sites should be considered first for new construction and redevelopment, as indicated on the Development map.

6.2. Property should be acquired in the order of priority indicated on the Land Acquisition map. This will allow the College to accommodate parking and housing needs that cannot feasibly be met within current campus boundaries.
LAND ACQUISITION MAP
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
Ashland, Wisconsin
7. Implementation

Decision-Making Process and Project Priorities

The Planning Strategy will help the Northland College define the best way to respond to change and new initiatives in ways that promote the green campus vision. In order to effectively guide all future development of the campus, the Strategy will be given the highest policy recognition—formal adoption by the Board of Trustees. As an adopted policy, the Planning Strategy supports the College’s Sustainability Charter and Strategic Plan and helps realize the goals of the College’s capital campaign.

Building on the current decision-making structure at Northland, administration of the Planning Strategy rests with the Board of Trustees, through the President’s Office. In order that individual projects align with the Campus Planning Strategy before they are built. This section recommends an extended design review and approval process. Campus-wide input will be incorporated on a project’s conformance, or ‘fit’, with a ‘green’ campus image. In addition to meeting development goals, this process will help enrich communication between varied campus interests. To these ends, the following policies are recommended.

Policies

7.1. The Northland College Campus Planning Strategy is to be formally adopted as policy by the Board of Trustees. The Guiding Principles, Plan Element maps and Policies within this document formally constitute the Planning Strategy.

7.2. The Board of Trustees will approve all amendments to the Planning Strategy and will receive an annual report on how the Strategy has served the College that year.

7.3. Responsibility for implementing the planning strategy will rest with the Board of Trustees, through the President, who will delegate responsibility for the strategy to a Master Planning Implementation Committee.

7.4. The Master Planning Implementation Committee will be responsible for reviewing new projects for conformance with the Strategy’s Guiding Principles.
This area is located in the ravine. It is used as a campsite and as a nighttime community area. Many people use the ravine as their home. The Northland community really cares about this popular area.

and policies, recommending amendments to the Strategy and reporting annually to the Board of Trustees. The Committee will create a forum for discussing projects with the campus community and other interested parties.

7.5. All aspects of designs, proposals or studies dealing with campus-owned lands, buildings, open spaces or infrastructure improvements will comply with the principles and policies of the Planning Strategy.

7.6. A process for regular information sharing will be established with community organizations, the City of Ashland and other agencies.

Projects

The following recommended projects, listed in order of priority, will emerge from Northland’s Capital Investment Program using the Guiding Principles of this Planning Strategy.

Project 1.
Develop a comprehensive signage system to meet the informational, directional and interpretive signage needs on campus and in the region.

Project 2.
Develop the Ellis Avenue entryway in conjunction with the City of Ashland and Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The best approach is to redesign the 12th to 16th Street segment as an urban corridor, employing traffic-calming devices (such as center median plantings and textured-pavement pedestrian crossings), installing signage to slow traffic and using environmental art to mark the campus entryway. Street trees should also be planted.

Project 3.
Conduct a regional design competition that will invite environmental artists to create entry art and campus markers in accordance with the green campus principles.

Project 4.
Restore the Bay City Creek ravine, in conjunction with the City of Ashland and environmental groups. The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute can lead this significant College outreach project. Matching funds may be available through the City and Wiscon-
Project 5.
Organize a series of educational workshops on reforestation and stream ecology as part of the ravine restoration project.

Project 6.
Extend the classroom space needs assessment process, to consider faculty and student preference for both flexible space classrooms and dedicated space for long-term interdisciplinary student research.

Project 7.
Conduct a resource inventory of the 100-acre Maxwell Nature Study Area and facility south of the campus for its ecological value and teaching and research potential, building on the student research done to date.

Project 8.
Extend the research and outreach work of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute with additional funding in the area of environmental resource management.

Project 9.
Develop a phased campus planting plan and maintenance schedule that will build the Living Laboratory, introduce a plant nursery and establish a demonstration gardens program with the overall intent of greening the campus with native species.

Project 10.
Purchase the south wetlands property and the north residential block for housing and parking.

Project 11.
Reconfigure the existing central parking lot in conjunction with the Gymnasium expansion to demonstrate sustainable parking lot design. This will minimize the space devoted to long-term parking and enhance the area’s function as a front yard to residence halls.

Project 12.
Develop interpretive trail spurs to the proposed walking and bicycle paths, offering information on campus sustainability efforts.