

10-year master plan approved by UT board

In ten years, the University of Toledo is going to have a whole new look, thanks to the University of Toledo's board of trustees' approval of the master plan.

The plan will focus on four key major themes: repositioning the academic core, consolidating athletics, investing in research, and enhancing student life.

"The new varsity athletic fields will energize the campus. The creation of a new research facility and academic quad on the engineering campus will provide something we have never had for the 4,000-plus engineering students," wrote Jason Toth, associate VP for facilities and construction.

Eric Brown, a fourth-year mechanical engineering student, said that the new academic quad on the engineering campus will be a real benefit for students.

"Most engineering students spend most of their days on the engineering campus, and they don't have many nice spots to chill," Brown said. "The quad will be a nice touch."

Toth wrote that the master plan will create a much different physical space on campus, while also adding to the sense of community and activity.

According to the master plan webpage, repositioning the academic core will focus on "investments in classroom technology and layout in the academic core, making our teaching spaces more flexible and effective."

Specifically, University Hall's unutilized space will be refurbished into administrative offices. Carlson Library and the Lancelot Thompson Student Union will add additional

gathering spaces for students.

According to Toth, some buildings will receive extensive infrastructure work that will greatly improve operational systems, "while others will receive updates, finishes and systems within classrooms that people can touch and feel so they appear more substantial."

"In the early years of the plan we target renovations in our most highly utilized classrooms to impact the greatest number of students and faculty as possible," Toth wrote.

The master plan will also focus on the more natural aspects of the school, with a river walk being added along the Ottawa River.

In terms of investing in research, UT's biggest change will be a new research building to be constructed west of Nitschke Auditorium.

"The multidisciplinary research facility is being designed to support all of our colleges," wrote Toth. "It will have both dry and wet lab space, computer lab space, collaborative meeting space and office space."

The master plan also aims to bring all athletic facilities onto main campus. Doing so will "energize Main Campus student life through easier access to intercollegiate athletics," states the master plan webpage.

The soccer team will begin playing inside the track as opposed to at Scott Park campus. There will also be additional softball and baseball fields built where Carter Hall, which will be demolished, currently stands.

When it comes to enhancing student life, most attention will be focused on student housing as well as some new outdoor recreation facilities.

"To attract more juniors and seniors to live on campus, we

will develop apartment-style housing (with ground-floor retail) on Dorr Street, adjacent to the Dorr Street Gateway," the webpage states.

According to Toth, at this point, lease rates for these apartments have not been discussed.

"We will construct our first dedicated outdoor recreational complex south of Dorr Street between Secor Road and Byrne Road, which could include a new facility for the University of Toledo Police Department and others," the master plan webpage states.

However, the plan does not address the issue on parking and will not be adding any spaces or lots.

"Parking was discussed throughout the planning process," Toth wrote. "A parking study was completed at the very beginning of the master planning process."

According to Toth, the survey concluded that UT does have sufficient parking, but it may not be located as close to locations as people wanted, lending to the conclusion that parking lot options may not be utilized well by students.

"Given this information, the limited availability of space on campus and financial constraints the decision was made to look at alternative use strategies first," Toth wrote.

However, if this strategy proves unsuccessful, a new parking lot along the Dorr Street corridor of campus could be added, according to Toth.

The projected \$275 million master plan is funded in multiple ways, including by State of Ohio Biennium Appropriations, Bond Capital and Private/Donor Funding, Toth wrote.