

ent, the future- and the grass

accepted

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to a population of 20,000

walkway system provide sufficient justification for a new building? Do we have to have a new building to make the walkway possible? Is there no other design solution to the problem? Is there a danger that the planning consultants are locking themselves into a single solution without questioning its relevance to all parts of the campus? For that matter, if the elevated walkway system is so important, why is Arts II not linked to HUB?

It is well known that earlier buildings, such as Tory, were not designed to facilitate through traffic. All too often they are barriers to pedestrian movement. The +15 walkway system provides a means of preventing the same problem in the newer parts of the campus, but does it necessarily help when the problem already exists?

Does a covered walkway in front of the Tory Building have to be elevated? The building itself is already a barrier to north-south movement. A covered walkway at ground level would create no extra barrier, and need create no nuisance to the Tory Building.

The two could be separated by a narrow landscaped space, with trees which would do much to soften the profile of the Tory Building.

Improved entrances to the main and basement levels of the Tory Building could be provided at two points; lounge space could be incorporated at the junctions, looking through glass walls to the Arts Court; and escalators at the east end could provide access from HUB and the food services building, without blocking the northward passage to the Tory Turtle and Rutherford House.

The important point is not whether this represents the "best" solution to the walkway problem. Rather, once it is admitted that there are alternative solutions, it becomes possible to look seriously at alternative sites for the BAC Building.

To carry this illustration one step further, a site could then be provided in the greenhouse area. The long range plan schedules this space for a computer centre and further buildings for the Faculty of Science. But how realistic are these proposals for a student population of 20,000, particularly bearing in mind that large northward and westward extensions are also shown, and that space will eventually be vacated in the Central Academic Building and the Engineering Building?

Which has the higher value? - adherence to the strict letter of a plan which has been outdated by population trends but which might be warranted again in an indefinite future - or preservation of an established open space in a high density part of the campus. I would urge that the latter is the only reasonable choice.

(v) The final argument for the proposed siting of the BAC Building is advanced by the long range planners: "the building contributes to the principle of the consolidation of the core of the campus." This illustrates the difficulty of translating a principle into development decisions.

Put very simply, how much is too much? Development densities that are accepted as unavoidable for a population of 30,000 can be intolerable to a population of 20,000. It is too early to assess the impact of HUB and Arts II on the Arts Court, but it must be substantial.

I would therefore submit that the principle of consolidation has already been served more than adequately for the north-east portion of the campus. But how to prove that this is so?

I can only reply that my perspective as a permanent user of this area must have more weight than that of absentee planners. I am as aware as anyone of the need to make development decisions that will not jeopardize long-term goals and objectives, and a resiting of the BAC Building would require a major rethinking of the plans for the northern portion of campus.

At the same time, it seems exceedingly short-sighted to sacrifice almost one-quarter of an established and necessary open space, when the need for so many of the proposed buildings is uncertain. We have no shortage of building sites at this stage in our development: we have a real shortage of effective open space.

The Immutability of the Long Range Plan

There is a final question which deserves at least brief comment: why challenge the long range plan now, when it was given an exhaustive review in 1969? There are several good reasons.

(i) The campus population and development expectations have changed radically since 1969. Sacrifices which were accepted reluctantly then, no longer have to be accepted at all.

(ii) The plan is schematic, a means of illustrating principles and concepts. Detailed proposals derived from the plan must always be questioned: do they advance the principles and concepts of the plan without causing injury to established rights and usage? Because of such questioning, some details of the plan have already been modified (e.g. Rutherford II).

(iii) Any suggestion that the BAC Building should not be challenged because it is conforming to the plan can be countered very easily. The precise impact of the present proposal could not have been anticipated from the plan, because they differ in two important points of detail:

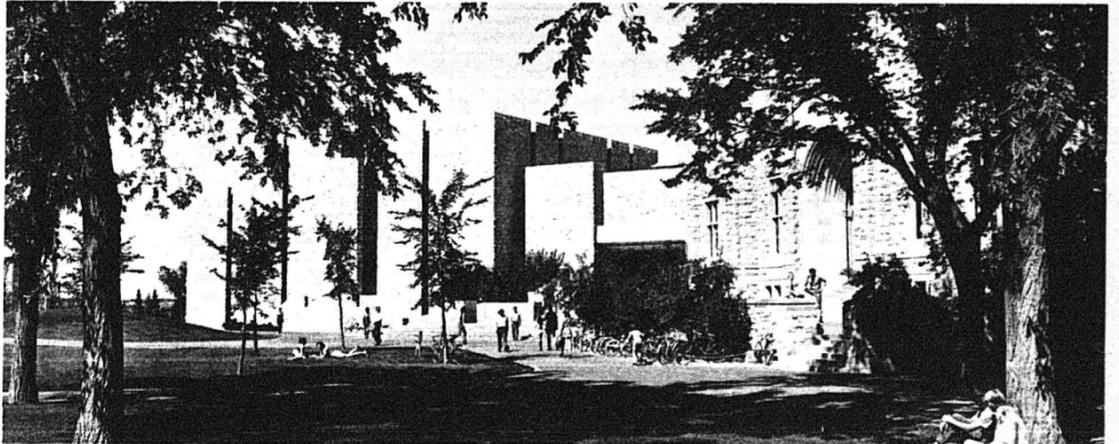
(a) the east-west walkway is routed through the BAC Building in the long range plan

(b) The BAC and Tory Buildings are separated by an elongated open space, not be a gallery and walkway. The reason is that HUB has been extended further north than was shown on the plan, and the food services building, which was to be at the east end of the BAC Building, was made during the detailed planning of HUB, so that its north end could be aligned with an east-west gallery between the BAC and Tory Buildings.

But when was this subtle change ever publicized? It is bad enough that the planning of the BAC Building should have reached so advanced a stage with no thought to its impact on the Department of Geography.

It is even worse to realize that the prime consultant was literally directed to a fixed building form by prior construction commitments about which we were kept equally ignorant.

U of A planner A. J. Diamond has characterized the desire to see coordination of buildings on campus as "simply a nostalgia for a medieval campus." Architecture at the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) proves, however, that university campuses don't have to be ugly, nor, if coordinated, do they have to be medieval.



The Thorvaldson building (above) and Qu'Appelle Hall, a residence (below), show how the old and the new are harmonized on the U of S campus simply by the use of a common building material.

