Florida Gulf Coast University

Buckingham Concept Report

A report by the Environmental Sustainability and Safety & Facilities Committees. May 22, 2014.
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Environmental Sustainability Committee Summary Narrative:

Background:
For the past two years, the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) and the Safety & Facilities Committee (SFC) were tasked with the responsibility of developing conceptual ideas for the Buckingham property by the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) chair, Provost, Dr. Ron Toll. During the first year each committee had separate discussions and visits to the site. As two committees were tasked with a similar charge, a joint subcommittee to work on the project was formed in October 2013. The subcommittee’s charge was to engage the broader university community and gather ideas for the property. In addition, Facilities and Planning staff met with the Faculty Senate to provide an overview of the property and challenges. In order to gather more widespread feedback, the subcommittee toured the property, conducted a campus-wide survey and used the property as a class project. This resulted in data from the campus-wide survey (Appendix 1) and a Small Area Report conducted by Dr. Margaret Banyan’s Land Use Planning course (Appendix 2).

This joint report uses this data as the basis for its recommendations. Considering that the ESC and SFC each have a different focus, this report includes a separate narrative from each committee.

Introduction:

Sustainability is a central component of Florida Gulf Coast University’s mission statement. The university established our own definition of sustainability (Appendix 3) that endorses the United Nations (UN) and the Earth Charter International’s definitions of sustainability. The UN defines sustainability as meeting our current needs without compromising future generations’ ability to do the same. Earth Charter International describes sustainability as cultivating, “respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” The Office of the Provost has stated that achieving the aforementioned definitions of sustainability “is a participatory process requiring collective engagement of the University community members.”

The ESC is comprised of faculty and staff members with diverse backgrounds and wide range of sustainability expertise. The committee is enthusiastic to actively participate in the process of integrating the university’s commitment to sustainability into the daily operations and functions of the institution. We are pleased to have the opportunity to make recommendations for the Buckingham Property.

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2 Florida Gulf Coast University Definition of Sustainability available at [http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/Env-Sustainability-Definition_approved-102711.pdf](http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/Env-Sustainability-Definition_approved-102711.pdf)
5 Florida Gulf Coast University Definition of Sustainability available at [http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/Env-Sustainability-Definition_approved-102711.pdf](http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/Env-Sustainability-Definition_approved-102711.pdf)
Buckingham Vision and Connection to University Strategic Planning Goals:

The Buckingham property should honor the university mission statement by using the space as a sustainable living-learning laboratory that successfully integrates with the Buckingham Rural Community Preserve stakeholders.

The Environmental Sustainability Committee has endeavored to include key components of the University’s Strategic Plan to guide our vision for this site. The ESC’s vision is reiterated in numbers one through three below and its connection to the University Strategic Plan are as follows:

1. **Create a space that honors FGCU’s mission of environmental sustainability and the local community’s needs and serves as a demonstration site for sustainable solutions.**
   a. Accomplishing this vision fulfills the promise stated in Strategic Plan Goal #5, “the University will demonstrate responsible leadership and innovation by infusing environmental sustainability through all critical dimensions of University life and community interactions including curriculum, research, service, campus administration and operations, and student life.”

2. **Create a multidisciplinary learning laboratory where sustainability and sustainable development are tools for student learning and faculty research.**
   a. Accomplishing this vision fulfills the promise stated in Strategic Plan Goal #2: Student Life, Growth, and Development by, “enhancing student growth and development through programs that engage them and develop skills and judgment.”
   b. Likewise, it fulfills the commitment stated in Strategic Plan Goal #7: Discovery and Application of Knowledge to “support scholarship and research” by “leveraging University faculty, staff, students, and facilities to enhance regional economic diversification.”

3. **Community members of the Buckingham Rural Community Preserve (BRCP) are involved members of the campus.**
   a. This aspect of the ESC’s vision relates to Strategic Plan #6 for Community Engagement by “creating partnerships and programs that are regionally responsive to the economic development needs of SW Florida.”
Guiding Principles:
These principals are universal and should be followed at all phases of the design process:

- Engage and involve community members of the Buckingham Rural Community Preserve.
- Reuse the existing developed land and facilities, and leave natural, conservation, or preserved lands for current and future environmental research projects.
- Reclaim and restore land
- Maintain water flow; control run-off and erosion.
- Set rigorous goals for energy conservation and onsite production.
- Comply with LEED Standards for sustainable building design.
- Err on the side of caution and conservation whenever there is a chance of infringing upon native wildlife, their habitat and ecosystems.
- Conservatively protect “nuisance native wildlife” and native plants (restrain pesticide use and trapping).

Phasing:

Phase 1
- Re-engage the Buckingham subcommittee and broaden it to include all appropriate stakeholders.
- Use the Property as the university’s northern annex—a satellite campus for self-run programs with low environmental impact and high community involvement.
- Use the space for hands-on Program opportunities for students that incorporate sustainability. (e.g., restoring habitats, retrofitting buildings, designing new buildings, community based/participatory action research).

Phase 2
- Integrate Programs established in the first phase more permanently into the site;
- Consider relocating some operations and offices to the property.
- Make Overnight accommodations available for recreation, research, and residencies.

Phase 3
- Maintain amenities, programs, and activities that accommodate the health of ecological and social systems.
- Nurture community engagement.
Steps to achieve Phase 1:

Physical/Operational:

Land/Water
- Study the effects of manmade impacts on soils, flow ways, and wildlife habitat and create strategies for mitigation.
- Investigate the pre-anthropogenic flow paths and assess feasibility and advantages of restoration.
- Design infrastructure for water catchment and create a plan to reduce runoff.
- Assess the safety of the water wells, septic tanks, drainage fields, sewers, etc.

Buildings
- Assess contaminants of usable structures. Conduct a building by building assessment of the costs and benefits of remediation.
- Install solar or other renewable energy sources for all buildings.
- All new structures should be built LEED Silver or higher.
- Cluster the structures around a central core to create a “Main Street”, mixed use feel. This will leave more space for conservation and recreational areas.

Infrastructure
- Assess contaminants of usable structures. Conduct a building by building assessment of the costs and benefits of remediation.
- Investigate ways to connect to the surrounding community to decrease the isolation between the FGCU and neighboring community.
- Establish a transportation plan that will decrease auto centricity and design complete streets that are safe and accessible for pedestrian and bicyclists.
- Establish a plan to connect buffer zones to Lee County 20/20 conservation areas to increase habitat space.

Social/Cultural/Educational:
- Survey the surrounding community to gain their input (possibly as a class project) in project development.
- Build reciprocal relationships. Learn how FGCU can fulfill community members’ unmet needs and rely on them for their knowledge and skills.
- Investigate ways to incorporate community “local” expertise into University programs.
- Provide a communications forum for the greater university and community partnerships.
- Investigate the feasibility of restoring the building which was previously used as a medical facility. If the building is safe to rehab, allow health programs to use it as an additional outlet for their training and as a place where community members of the Buckingham Rural Community Preserve can receive medical care. If the building cannot be rehabilitated, consider building a new structure for this purpose.
- Balance the current needs with the long-term impacts of those needs. For example, ideas such as placing a body farm on the site are not recommended because of their long-term implications.
Steps to achieve Phase 2:

**Physical/Operational:**

- **Land/Water**
  - Reinvestigate the effects of FGCU’s impacts on soils, flow ways, and wildlife habitat and create strategies for mitigation.
  - Implement mitigation plans including Brazilian Pepper and other non-native invasive species removal.
  - Implement a plan for interacting with and enhancing the conservation areas (e.g. controlled burns).

- **Buildings**
  - Consider demonstration programs that reinforce energy efficient building structures such as the Living Building Challenge and perusing LEED Gold or Platinum.
  - Implement programs to manage and remediate toxins in buildings and soils.

- **Infrastructure**
  - Assess feasibility of public transit options.
  - Implement sustainable transit programs that connect the community and the FGCU main campus into the Buckingham site.

**Social/Cultural/Educational:**

- Create onsite amenities that the surrounding community needs based on the information gathered from research and other community outreach.
- House a full-time community outreach person on site.

**The Planning Process & Stakeholder Engagement:**

Achieving the aforementioned vision, guiding principles, and phases will not be possible without successfully engaging all stakeholders and developing a process that guides informed decision making. To achieve this, the ESC recommends the following process:
Observe and experience the site- Create a broad committee that works with the planners in the design phase of the process. The committee should include students, faculty, staff, and Buckingham Rural Community Preserve members. Do not move forward with planning, building, or developing until the committee has been consulted and continue to consult the committee when reevaluating and continuing to plan for future development and restoration projects on the site.

Engage with neighbors- Develop a strategy for building and maintaining relationships with members of the BRCP, Lee County, local businesses, and other interests. We recommend FGCU use a two-pronged approach. First, engage the broadened subcommittee and students from an appropriate class to conduct a SWOT Analysis that analyzes the human, social, physical, financial, environmental, political, and cultural capital of the area. Simultaneously, create a framework for community engagement. We recommend using the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)’s Public Participation Spectrum and creating an appropriate strategy for interaction and reviewing the Buckingham portion of the Lee County Plan (see Goal 17 under Future Land Use, beginning on page II-63 available here).

Implement a phase- Put concrete plans into action.

Reevaluate- Evaluate lessons learned from implementing a phase and seek feedback from stakeholders.

Conclusion:
Our vision and suggestions for the Buckingham property are closely aligned with our Campus Land Use Report. We encourage the PBC to review that report whenever making decisions about the future development of any FGCU property. We appreciate the opportunity to be engaged in the development process at Buckingham and would like to continue to provide leadership in the development and planning of the main campus and Buckingham properties.

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7 IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum is available at http://www.iap2.org.au/documents/item/84
8 The University of Victoria has created a framework for community engagement that could be adapted for FGCU’s needs. Their report is available at http://www.uvic.ca/assets2012/docs/pdfs/UVic-Engagement-Framework-Dec-13-2012_v1.pdf
11 Florida Gulf Coast University Campus Land Use Report http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/Final_Campus_Land_Use_Report.pdf
Safety & Facilities Committee Observations
Buckingham Complex Summary Report:

Background

In the Fall of 2013, the Safety and Facilities Committee (SFC) was charged with assessing the opportunities for development on the FGCU Buckingham Complex site and to offer ideas for future facilities. A similar charge was given to the Environmental Sustainability Committee.

To develop the property concepts, there were several data collection efforts. In the Spring of 2013, members of the SFC visited the property. Following that, the SFC and the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) formed a subcommittee to conduct a shared survey delivered to the campus community. Finally, the URP 5312 Land Use Planning class during the Spring of 2014 conducted an analysis in the form of a small area report and presented this information to the SFC. This report bases its findings on the campus wide survey, small area report, and feedback from Committee members.

This portion of the report is from the prospective of the SFC. The Committee considered the included list of suggested future uses as well as the context of the existing property. The Committee offers the below list of property and surrounding area features in an effort to help inform the University. This is not an exhaustive list, but identifies several unique resources that may help reveal natural alignments between uses and the property. The goal is to start development of a framework from which to base future planning decisions.

It is important to note that neither the uses from the survey, nor the concepts from the student report, have been vetted for their financial feasibility or for their specific safety and security concerns. As uses arise, however, this framework may provide some context for decision making.

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12 The Buckingham Small Area Report was very comprehensive in laying out the current condition and issues of the property and potential future use zones.
13 The survey and URP 5312 Small Area Report are included in the ESC report and will not be reprinted here.
14 Specific safety and security concerns will vary based on future uses of the site.
Existing Property Potential Opportunities

There are several opportunities for the property development, based on its location and context. These include the following:

- **Property location.** The property is located within an active rural area. This presents opportunities for connection between FGCU and existing activities such as animal husbandry, farming, agriculture, forestry research, and natural animal habits.
- **Close proximity to the Buckingham airfield.** The proximity to the Buckingham airfield allows for potential interactions with other regional areas. This could expand FGCU’s impact and resources.
- **Shares the area with existing residential development.** The site places the University near a potential neighboring workforce, patrons, continuing education students, and traditional students.
- **Existing property is organized in a “community” arrangement.** The physical facility components encourage unity of function by supporting each other. This provides reuse flexibility for multiple activities with minimal re-design.
- **Property includes several large, cleared, well-drained open spaces.** This type of space is uncommon in Southwest Florida, and provides opportunities for gathering of large groups and community-wide events.
- **Property location is near the City of Fort Myers and North Fort Myers.** This puts the University closer to an older, more established part of Lee County and may facilitate reach into pockets of low-income residents that are not currently possible at the main campus.
- **Community and internal road system.** There are existing roadways in the rural community preserve. While they are primarily one-lane rural roads, they are adequate for the current community. However, any large scale project on the Buckingham property would need a traffic analysis that would impact the community. Internally, the property contains over three miles of paved, curved roadway. This amount of existing roadway is unusual and offers easy access to most areas of the developed site. The internal roadway system is adequate for its current level of use. Based on future increased use or complete redevelopment, the roadway, sidewalk and bike lane system would need to be evaluated.
- **Currently, transportation for activities at the Buckingham property is accomplished by personal vehicle or department small vans.** However, as the surrounding community development changes, public transportation by LeeTran or campus shuttles may become more financially feasible.\(^\text{15}\)
- **The natural, undisturbed portion of the site is sharply defined from the almost completely cleared portion of the property.** This existing development concept maintained a larger contiguous natural area.

\(^{15}\) If any FGCU classes are scheduled at the location, the Registrar would need to state in the course description that it is an off-campus location and transportation is not provided.
• Existing building structures are all one-story. In this case, stairs and elevators are not needed to upgrade existing buildings for physical accessibility. As resources become available, a priority should be that any building not suitable for future use should be demolished, using all safety precautions necessary for the hazards within those buildings.

• Main entrance and guardhouse. There is one main entrance with a guardhouse that helps control access to the property and provides a desirable level of safety and security. This might be advantageous for community events or securing the property. The security check point is moveable and may remain in its current location, be moved to the front entry of the property, or be eliminated. Additional considerations will need to be made regarding what role security personnel will play in the future site management.

• Surrounding area public safety services. As stated in the Small Area Report, there are sufficient public safety services (Sheriff, fire, EMS) for current and future uses. The on-site security is comprised of one FGCU employee and additional 24/7 security service provided by a private company. This security has been in place since FGCU obtained the property and provides adequate safety for current activities.

• Cooperation with area agencies and services. The Buckingham Complex is positioned to cooperate with a wide variety of services and agencies. For example, the continued use of the facility and collaborative activities by public emergency service agencies helps to further knowledge and increase familiarity with the site. Continued cooperation with regional agencies will continue to be a win-win situation.\textsuperscript{16}

**Conclusion**

Eventually, the selection of uses for the Buckingham site will align with the University’s growth plan and support activities that accomplish the University mission; however, this determination is also influenced by available property resources and culture of the surrounding Buckingham community. This summary highlights just a few of these contextual opportunities. It is acknowledged a more comprehensive study of the Buckingham property, the surrounding community and the University’s growth plan will be included within the University’s Campus Master Plan process for this site in the future.

\textsuperscript{16} The Small Area Report outlines a list of these county agencies and their proximity to the site.