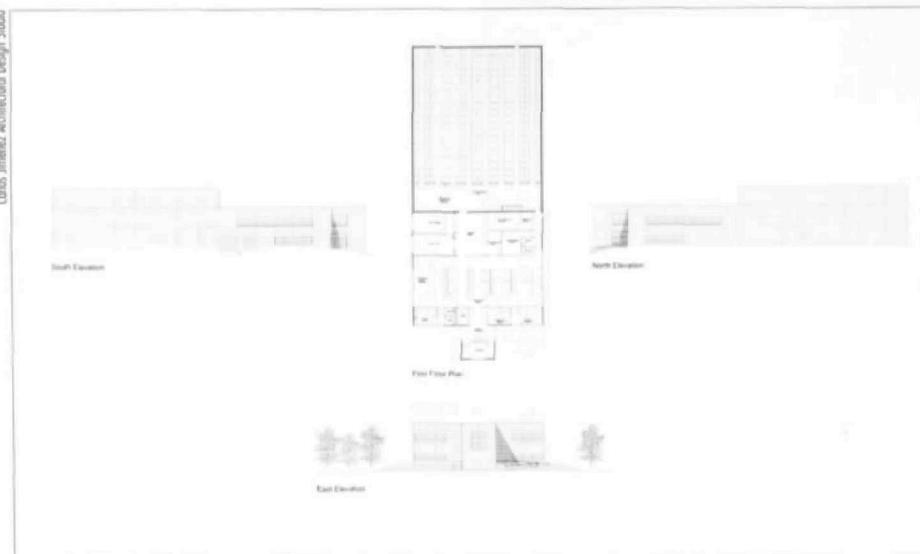


Above: One possible plan for the Rice campus. Below: Elevations and a first-floor plan for Carlos Jimenez's Library Service Center.



RETHINKING RICE

Michael Graves helps the university plan its future

DEAN CURRIE, vice president of finance and administration at Rice University, likens this era of Rice's development to the closing of the American frontier. Alumni — especially older alumni — have viewed the Rice campus as having infinite possibilities for westward expansion.

But the west is no longer limitless, says Currie, and coming to grips with the limits to expansion has fundamentally changed the way that the Board of Trustees plans for the school's future. With Rice's prime land already put to use, the campus' western frontier has closed.

To address this issue, the administra-

tion and trustees have embarked on a new plan for future expansion — a new chapter in Rice's history of master planning. For almost one hundred years the campus has grown under the celebrated master plan developed by Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Goodhue. ("Willy," the statue of Rice's founder at the center of Rice's academic quad, holds a copy of the Cram Goodhue plan.) More recently, the plan was updated by noted architect Cesar Pelli.

Now, with the help of Michael Graves, FAIA — an architect whose name is synonymous with 1990s post-

modernism, and whose products crowd the shelves of Target — the university is once again mapping its future expansion. According to Currie, the Board chose Graves not only because "he was so thoughtful about the institution," but also because he represented "master planning in the best sense: He began by listening to the client." Rice had previously hired Graves to design Martel College and the expansions of Brown and Jones Colleges.

In late February, a spinal infection left Graves, 68, paralyzed from the waist down. Despite related travel restrictions, he and his design team remain heavily involved in Rice's architectural plans.

The new plan, says Currie, might include such radical changes as reorienting the campus to take advantage of Rice's growing interaction with the nearby Texas Medical Center. William Barnett, chairman of the Rice board of governors, notes that Rice has more than 75 major joint ventures in the Medical Center right now, including 50 with Baylor College of Medicine alone.

Rice might refashion the three-acre Tidelands Motel property as a gateway to the Medical Center. According to Barnett, the property eventually could host a major research facility surrounded by a large university bookstore, shops, cafes and places for people to gather and discuss ideas.

Students and faculty would also use this gateway at the intersection of Main Street and University Boulevard to board the new light rail system being installed along Main Street. Light rail will give students and faculty easy access to relatively inexpensive housing along the rail line. Rice Owl fans could also use light rail to

attend sporting events, significantly alleviating campus parking problems.

The master plan also takes into account Rice's new satellite campus — a 30-acre tract of land just outside the 610 Loop donated by Rice trustee Raymond Brochstein. The tract will be used chiefly to provide desperately needed storage.

For that land, Carlos Jimenez, an associate professor of architecture at Rice, designed the 26,400-square-foot Library Service Center currently under construction. The library annex, capable of holding 1.75 million volumes, will significantly increase Fondren Library's capacity. Students and faculty will be able to review materials in an on-site reading room, or request that books be transferred to Fondren Library. The university will also use the Brochstein tract to store commencement stands and other bulky items.

To address campus flooding, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is paying for the university to expand Alumni Drive, converting it into an "overland flow channel." This project will direct campus floodwater toward a detention pond and Harris Gully. Although this project will eliminate the current tennis courts, eight new courts will be built between the swimming pool behind Autry Court and the track/soccer stadium.

Currie also notes that the master plan will allow for updated exercise facilities, which he says are desperately needed. One idea under consideration is razing the existing gymnasium. Eventually the university would build a larger, new gymnasium with up-to-date exercise facilities on the spot.

To preserve Rice's green space, much of the contemplated parking on campus would be built underground.

Under the master plan the administration plans to remodel the president's house, the O'Connor Building. According to Barnett, "It will be a kind of window into Rice for a lot of people: visitors, alumni and prospective students." The refurbished building will also house the admissions office.

Rice's new president, who will replace outgoing Malcolm Gillis in the summer of 2004, will occupy the Wiess House at the corner of Main Street and Sunset Boulevard. Harry Wiess, one of the Humble Oil founders, commissioned William Ward Watkin, the first chair of Rice's architecture department, to design the pink-ish Mediterranean-style house. Wiess' widow donated the Shadyside neighborhood home to Rice in 1974.

Architect Bill Neuhaus, of W.O. Neuhaus Associates, is handling the \$3.3 million remodeling job, which will provide large entertaining spaces, private gardens, and a small parking court. The remodeling project will also mend the house's façade and repair damage caused by Tropical Storm Allison.

— Janet H. Moore