



University of Windsor Approves Pedestrian-Friendly Plan for Main Campus

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By Chris Thompson | 26 November 2013

The University of Windsor's board of governors have approved Phase I of a plan that will gradually transform the main campus into a pedestrian-friendly, largely car-free zone.

The first phase of the seven-phase campus master plan was presented to the board by its authors, +VG Architects, who completed the plan after extensive consultation with university and community stakeholders.

"A very big piece of this is the closure of Sunset and Fanchette and I think it's something that people have thought about for a long time; it will allow us to significantly pedestrianize the heart of the campus," said university president Alan Wildeman.

"It will allow us to re-imagine those spaces that currently are roadways for traffic, and create some great spaces to connect our buildings together and for people to hang out, to study, to do whatever they want to do."

The first step of the plan will be the closure of Sunset Avenue next summer just south of the service driveway for Chrysler Hall North.

There will be a cul-de-sac created to allow public drop-offs and parking lot access.

Following that will be the closure of Fanchette Street, which will

be transformed into a pedestrian gateway to campus approaching Chrysler Tower on a diagonal angle.

There will be a grid paved pattern, plants, benches and a new large bicycle parking area. A drop-off area for vehicles will be constructed on California Avenue.

Following that, there will be a community commons park constructed in the area between the Toldo Medical Building and the Odette School of Business.

A parking lot and a number of older homes housing university agencies will be removed.

The park will include "dynamic" amphitheatre-style seating, a two-way stage structure, ball courts and green space.

There will also be additional landscaping introduced around the Odette School of Business and along Wyandotte Street West providing a link to the new Ed Lumley Centre for Engineering Innovation.

Another initiative of the transformation is what will be known as the River Commons, and area between Lambton Tower, the biology building and Chrysler Hall South will be a space that draws inspiration from the Detroit River.

There will be coloured paving with an abstract map of the river and its islands, the Ambassador Bridge and early French settlement.

The final phase will include a Welcome Centre at Wyandotte and Sunset on the site of the old music building, with a design yet to be determined.

All the initiatives are projected to be completed by 2017 and funded through various sources.

“We’re going to bring each project forward on its merits so now that the plan is approved, we’ll do it in a step-wise manner, we’ll start with the first ones and then let’s develop the detailed cost and those will come back to the board as individual projects,” said Wildeman.

The projects must be paid for outside of the operating budget of the university.

“There are some capital sources of funding that we talked about; are there fundraising opportunities, are there government grants available,” said Wildeman.

“All of these things we need to say, OK how can we piece these together and get these things done, because there’s tremendous excitement about the plan.”

Wildeman said the project would be a draw for potential students.

“We want the campus to be a place that people want to be at,” Wildeman said.

“What was approved today, we’re really excited about it, it’s going to completely change the appearance of this whole corridor down the centre of the campus. Totally transform it. If we can get that done, that’s a tremendous attraction for people to want to come and study here.”

+VG Architects is a full-service architectural firm offering new design, expansions and heritage restorations for cultural, educational, municipal, justice, healthcare, residential and recreational facilities. Our staff of +50 operates in four offices in Ontario, in Brantford, Kitchener, Toronto and Belleville.

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