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SMC Master Plan Presented to Town Council

By Sophie Braccini



Proposed design for entry roundabout Image provided

changes in undergraduate student enrollment and only very minor increase in graduate student enrollment," affirmed the president. Donahue also presented the plan as a way to address some of the community concerns that were raised in recent years in terms of traffic, noise, lighting and campus parking. "We feel that the town and the college have a mutual goal: for Saint Mary's College to become the leading catholic university in the western United States," he said.

Project leaders from MIG, a Berkeley-based planning consultant brought in by SMC to support the planning process, presented the plan's first phase of main projects.

The major developments include improving and remodeling the library and learning commons to service students' research needs; building a new residence hall of 182 beds for junior and senior students desiring to continue to live on campus; constructing a roundabout where St. Mary's Parkway intersects with St. Mary's Road, creating a smoother flow to enter and exit the campus, and adding a more eminent entrance; building parking decks at two campus locations to increase the amount of onsite parking; and improving sports facilities.

In term of traffic progress, the plan proposes enhanced bicycle circulation and intensification of the Gael Rail program that shuttles students to and from BART when the regular Contra Costa Transportation Authority buses are not running.

The college also made the decision to pursue excellence in sustainability by implementing a Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS), which will measure and control the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through building and landscaping practices.

Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf asked about the second entrance the college wants to create off of St Mary's Road. "Why not build a second entry at the level of Rheem Boulevard?" he asked. MIG consultants said the location chosen south of the campus was the least impactful location for an access that would be used only in case of emergency.

When Councilmember Dave Trotter asked how many decks would be constructed over the existing parking area by the entry of the campus, he was told the plan was to build one level. "I'm of the view that you could make it a three deck structure," said Trotter. "A multilevel structure could mitigate the problem the college currently faces when people tend to park along St. Mary's Road."

The project's environmental impact review is currently underway and will continue until the

Saint Mary's College is an economic heavyweight in Moraga and in Lamorinda as a whole, so when SMC President James Donahue presented the college's 20-year Master Plan at the Oct. 28 Town Council meeting, everyone listened closely. Despite its size and seniority - Saint Mary's existed before there was a Town of Moraga - SMC has to abide by the common Moraga laws for development, and it is in the college's best interest to collaborate with town staff to set a compliant and efficient process.

"We believe that the Master Plan represents the continuation of our efforts to achieve town-gown relations of renewed trust, cooperation and shared interest," said Donahue in his introduction to the council. He explained the motives and purpose of the plan: to not grow in terms of number of students, but to improve current and future facilities, enhance mobility and pursue sustainability goals. "(We envision) almost no

beginning of 2016. In the spring, the public process will begin with a review by the planning commission followed by a review and approval by the Town Council.

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[back](#)

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