

March 18, 2010

Dear UTM 2010 Master Plan Committee:

At our Geography/Environment Department meeting on March 17th we decided to share with you our departmental consensus regarding a particular aspect of the proposed plan, i.e., the need to provide additional parking via a surface lot that is adjacent to the north end of the UTM campus. Some of the points that we raised were as follows:

- There is a clear agreement among UTM faculty, staff and students that the green and open aspect of UTM's campus is one of its most attractive and important attributes. The wealth of flora (including the endangered American Chestnut and trees of significance including Black Walnut, Bitternut and Butternut) and fauna (deer, foxes and rabbits as well as the endangered Jefferson salamander) that are found on campus are highly appreciated for their beauty as well as for the wealth of research and teaching opportunities they provide for both faculty and students. As such, **anything that the MasterPlan can do in terms of preserving open and connected green space on the campus is to be encouraged.**
- UTM should continue to position itself at the forefront of environmentally sustainable practices and development. Most UTM users support planning for a dynamic campus where students and faculty spend the day and, even, some nights contributing to the social and intellectual richness of the community. Such a campus is incompatible with the proposed balanced parking distribution. **The MasterPlan should identify ways to enhance the opportunities for engagement rather than tacitly favoring environmentally-costly commuter behavior.**
- We remain very skeptical about the need for more parking on campus. Recent research on parking on university campuses strongly suggests that providing more parking encourages everyone to drive more frequently while providing subsidized or free transit to students, faculty and staff encourages the use of that type of transportation. **UTM has and should continue to embrace demand management as a response to growth** rather than simply increasing the supply of parking especially given data which suggests that only 25% of students require parking on campus and growth in faculty and staff is likely to be slow and limited in the next decade.
- UTM should be designed to **accommodate more transit, walking and bicycles** as opposed to facilitating a greater reliance on single passenger private vehicles. Using public transit and walking **will reduce green house gases, promote healthier lifestyles and is in keeping the provisions of Mississauga's Healthy Cities Initiative.**

- Providing better access to the northern part of campus can be achieved through many means that do not require building additional parking lots located in Greenfields, including **stacked parking, providing for a transit stop in the north part of campus, covered walkways and a free accessible shuttle (electric) bus service** that circles the campus.
- It is the norm, on most urban and suburban campuses, for staff, faculty and students to expect to walk 10-15 minutes from their parking areas to their offices, labs and classrooms. **Walking regularly is strongly associated with improved health outcomes** in a variety of literatures and disciplines. The likely trend of driving to the North Building for the day and then driving to the gym later should be avoided. Stronger pedestrian linkages would make walking from the parking deck more enjoyable.
- Replacing currently undeveloped land with a parking lot as proposed in the 2000 version of the campus plan **destroys a unique resource and compromises the ability of our department to continue to gather priceless data from the 30-year old weather station** that currently occupies land near the designated site. The current proposal, to build a parking lot on land currently occupied by the weather station, destroys that ability altogether. In addition to the window on climate change that the temperature data from this station provide, the station plays an active role in our teaching program and receives numerous 'hits' from web sites around the world, effectively giving the world a unique window on UTM.
- UTM's new generation of students, faculty and staff will be more flexible about transportation requirements and even more committed to sustainable practices than is currently the case. **We should be planning for the needs of these future generations rather than accommodating patterns of behavior based on outdated models of planning and development.**

We would appreciate it very much if you could share our thoughts with the Committee and respond to our concerns in a timely fashion.

Sincerely,

The Department of Geography at UTM