Athens Innovation District

Final Submittal

Philip Shippey  |  Senior Capstone
Professor David Spooner
May 5th, 2015
Inventory & Analysis
Aerial image of the project site. Note the site's proximity to downtown Athens and UGA's North Campus.
The idea of an innovation district is to combine tech-related workplaces with retail, residential, and recreational facilities. This project site is located in Athens, GA adjacent to the University of Georgia’s historic North Campus. There were numerous challenging factors for this project: topography, circulation routing, and conserving local ecology associated with the North Oconee River.

It was determined that the project site needed a strong criteria for development to be justified. The theming of the project site was based on the assertion that downtown Athens needs a destination for people to visit.
Photo A | intersection of U.S. 78 and E. Broad St.

Photo B | view from sidewalk leading into project site from North Campus

Photo C | view from high point on eastern edge of North Campus.
Sight lines into and out of the site were investigated. These observations were important in the design process due to the dramatic elevation changes present on site. Also, paying careful attention to visual cues proved to be integral in the assigning of building uses in the master planning stage. Please refer to previous page for site photographs.
The value of the parcels within the project site were studied in order to have grounds for formulating development. For example, it was determined that the property currently owned by the university (in red) would remain that way. The remaining parcels would be utilized for retail and open space development.
Only the Hodgson Oil Building is to remain. Some of the existing structures fell within the 75' river buffer along the North Oconee River; these are now gone. Current university buildings would be relocated in the new plan.
Circulation was one of the leading factors that guided planning and site design within the project site. In reference to the master plan, the building footprints themselves were designed to be oriented towards the various pedestrian, rail and automobile corridors on site.
Conceptualization
Step-down architecture is reflective of the site's steepness and the free-standing brick walls that were present on site before demolition.

This building in Singapore is a good example of a green roof descending to grade.


Eco-Zones Concept Forming

Green Roof Complex

Void Becomes
Eco-Transition Zone

Research Facility
The overarching idea driving this conceptual design is the presence of "avenues" through the site. This concept was based largely off the circulation analysis. This concept also set out to establish the allocation of building usages throughout the project site.
Master Planning
Below is the first iteration for the master plan of the innovation district. The building footprints were laid out in reference to the transportation corridors through the site. The footprints were designed in such a way that they reinforce the progressive nature of the project. This plan also provided the first square footage study for the project.
This is a figure-ground diagram of the proposed building footprints. The footprints are more realistic here than in the original iteration. This is due to the realignment of the footprints to be more or less 90 degrees, rather than acute. Note that the proposed buildings are carefully placed outside the limits of the 75’ river buffer.
This is a figure-ground diagram showing the tree canopies within the project site. Eco-zones were created by placing bottom-land species in the vegetated swales and bio-retention areas. Upland species are placed in the higher elevation portions of the site.
The final master plan includes the amenities established in the first iteration. However, a few adjustments were made. The adjustments included: more realistic building footprints and an ADA accessible ramp to the multi-modal station to the north. The focal point of the plan is the large green roof complex at the center of the site.
This elevation is looking at the green roof complex from Oconee Street looking east. Seen in this drawing is the vegetated swale and its relationship to the bio-retention area. The swale is planted heavily primarily with native species. Winterberry Hollies and native grasses comprise the bulk of the ground-plane plantings.
Site Design
This aerial sketch of the green roof complex and surrounding landscape shows the bio-retention area clearly as well as a digital display board that was been placed on the lowest wall. The display board could be used to advertise businesses within the innovation district in addition to other businesses in the downtown area.
This sketch shows the central open space on top of the green roof complex. Seen here is the interface between the roofs and the established grade of the central open space. The sketch also gives an idea of the view from the complex out over the site and towards the river.
Note the green roof complex, bio-retention area, and the avenue concept in the site plan.
- Connected systems of swales & bio-retention areas mitigate stormwater runoff.
Native plants were primarily used throughout the site. A few exotic species were placed for certain aesthetic qualities.
Construction Documentation
The bio-retention area associated with the green roof complex includes numerous wetland plants. Most notably, three species of Pitcher Plant are located in the bottom of the retention area. These wetland plants assist in the amelioration of pollutants that are carried in the stormwater runoff from Oconee Street.
This detailed plan and elevation of the bio-retention area clearly illustrates the functionality of this site feature. Note that the depth of the low-point is low enough to support standing water in the event of a large storm.
The nine-grid pattern seen in this stained glass railing detail is a modernistic statement that also represents the streets of downtown Athens. The idea was to show the spatial relationship between downtown and the innovation district. The transparent glass in the center of each grid adds visual interest and is an interpretation of the centrality of the green roof complex within the innovation district. Please reference the elevation drawing in the master planning section of this document to see the application of this item.