

The Chemistry Building

A new Chemistry building for the College of Arts & Sciences is currently under construction and will relocate the Department of Chemistry's teaching laboratories, related support spaces and classrooms from McCracken Hall into a new, consolidated facility. The building site is southwest of Waldo Library and east of Wood Hall. The project delivery has been "fast tracked with occupancy slated for December, 2006.

The new Chemistry building creates both a problem and opportunity. The problem has to do with the fact that it presently occupies what was the primary (central green space) on the Western campus. There have been past discussions whether a different location would have been preferable.

Sangren (north campus green space)

That said, an opportunity exists to create a new green space to be located directly north of the library in front of Sangren Hall. It would require relocating the present parking lot. One possibility is to use the parking facility directly across from the administration building plus some additional parking that will be made available in the rear of the Bernhard Center – following the redesign of the Bernhard student center.

The north campus green space would have to be fully integrated with the current plaza and flag pole – heading toward the Lee Honors College and Haenicke Building.

If successful, the north campus green space would provide a complement to the Miller plaza green space – providing students and visitors with a second major green space both north and south of Waldo library.

Preliminary Recommendations

If we start with the premise that Waldo library is the center of WMU's campus, then Miller plaza (to the south) and the Sangren plaza (to the north) provide a sense of balance to prospective visitors, students and professional staff at WMU.

Critical to that effort, is having well designed pathways that tie both green space areas together. This should include the proper brickwork, lighting (lamps and polls) and signage.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard A. Gershon

Notes on the Redesign of WMU's Main Campus

Richard A. Gershon, Chair of Campus Planning & Finance Council.

We start with the premise that the general look and feel of the university campus – contributes directly to the vision and culture of what Western Michigan University stands for as an institution of higher learning.

- I An inviting university campus contributes to:
 - » the successful recruitment of new students -
 - » a successful on campus experience for current students -
 - » an inviting place to visit for guests and visitors
 - » a satisfying place to work for faculty and professional staff.

Miller Plaza

Today, Miller Plaza represents the most important green spaces on the Western Michigan University campus. Miller plaza is the central hub that ties together the Miller Performing Arts Center, the Dalton Music Recital Halls, the Gilmore Theater Arts complex as well as the soon to be Richmond Arts Center. Miller Plaza, with its central fountain, is a major gathering place for Western students whether its attending classes, Bronco bash or attending one of the university's many cultural events on campus.

Nevertheless, time and Michigan winters have taken their toll on the pavement and fountain. In addition, the current lighting structure (lamps and polls) are dated and in serious disrepair.

The construction of the new Richmond Art Center and renovation of Brown Hall provides us with an opportunity to reconsider the current design of Miller Plaza. We are now at a point in time where a redesign of Miller plaza would be an important step in revitalizing the look of Western's campus. Several things to consider would be:

- the current design of the central fountain
- the current pavement and whether a better design is in order
- a new lighting system in terms of lamps and polls – that can tie Miller Plaza with the various pathways around the Chemistry building -- leading toward Waldo library as well as north to the proposed north campus green space.