ACCESSIBILITY

The Master Plan for the University of Texas at San Antonio Campus is multifaceted and accommodates massive growth. With growth planning comes the responsibility of providing access in what is already a very complicated setting. Access provides opportunities for future students as well as opportunities for the campus administrators to market to a whole new demographic.

Over the projected phases of this Master Plan, the overall strategy is to move parking out to the outer edges of the campus and provide more pedestrian mall areas along the interior focal points of the campus, making it a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Friendly to some can become unfriendly to others, and we are dedicated to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, view the growth of UTSA as a positive step that is embraced by faculty and students alike.

In the Long Range Plan, parking will eventually be almost exclusively inside parking garages. Many campus environments are moving to the "pedestrian mall" structure, which leaves all parking on the outside borders of the campus. This can be difficult for people who are unable to traverse long distances on foot. However, if there is no parking in the interior of the campus then there is no need for accessible parking in the interior of the campus. The Americans with Disabilities Act works toward equality, not special treatment.

The situation at UTSA is not atypical. Each newly constructed parking lot must have fully compliant accessible parking spaces serving it. Each of the accessible parking spaces that are provided must connect to an accessible route to the buildings they intend to serve. The key to mobility for a pedestrian-oriented campus will be in having a strong sidewalk system that is fully accessible and then is maintained in an accessible condition. That part is very important to the overall success of this strategy. The Americans with Disabilities Act law (not the standards) requires all building owners to maintain their properties in an accessible condition, so sidewalk maintenance will be a vital part of the future success of this Master Plan.

The highest priority for access, as dictated by the Legislature through the ADA Law, is to get people to and into buildings. Therefore our initial focus is on the parking strategy and path of travel to accessible entrances of each building on campus. Since access does no good if people are unable to find it, part of the strategy is to ensure that students and faculty who need access know where the accessible routes are located. This is also vitally important to the success of a good access plan, especially in a complicated campus such as the Central Campus.

The second-highest priority is called "Access to Goods and Services" and deals with all of the interior paths of travel. That includes everything from elevator upgrades to hardware upgrades, and those changes will be worked into each phase. New buildings, of course, will have these access features built in from the beginning.

More details for the access plans for each phase are found in the Appendix Volume. The overall success of the "Access" part of this Master Plan is to ensure each phase has the accessibility elements embedded into the planning process instead of added as an afterthought. This does not mean, however, that the University can't solve individual problems for individual people.

To accommodate a faculty member who has a heart condition and needs parking close to the building they teach in, a "reserved" space can be provided to meet that need and does not have to be identified as an accessible parking space or be compliant with the access standards. Individual agreements can be made to accommodate faculty/staff needs without jeopardizing the overall campus plan. What is important, however, is that the spaces that are not compliant with the access standards are not given the same signage or identification as those that are required to be fully compliant.