



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

GULF PARK CAMPUS PLAN 2025

Forward from the President

Colleagues:

I am proud to share with you the updated Campus Master Plan for The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park Campus. This plan was carefully developed to build upon the prior Campus Master Plan and is intended to guide future decisions about the institution's facilities to encourage growth and continued success.

This plan was developed with input from Gulf Park stakeholders and city partners, along with expert guidance from PAGE/Canizaro-Cawthon-Davis. The updated Master Plan includes plans for future investment in existing and historic buildings and spaces and planning for future growth and new opportunities in academic programs and research. The plan addresses priorities for renovation, new construction, open spaces, mobility and infrastructure.

Work on the revised Gulf Park Master Plan was informed by the following seven Planning Principles:

- ▶ Protect historic open spaces and buildings
- ▶ Extend and enhance the character of campus through the contextual design of future buildings and open spaces
- ▶ Create and promote safe environments for learning, research and social engagement
- ▶ Promote sustainability, environmental design and energy conservation
- ▶ Develop an integrated circulation system

- ▶ Integrate modern technology
- ▶ Implement strategic growth practices

As you review this document, keep in mind that the Master Plan is a living document that reflects our current priorities and our bold hopes for the future as we understand them today. Institutional priorities will evolve over time as will the Master Plan. We must remember that bringing this full vision to life will require many years and significant financial investment. We must initially focus on immediate needs and explore future development as resources permit.

I appreciate the committee members and the professionals with PAGE/CCD who devoted countless hours to considering the highest and best use of our Gulf Park grounds and facilities. Thanks to their thoughtful process and creative ideas, we have a plan that continues elevating Southern Miss...to the Top!



Joseph S. Paul, Ph.D.
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The background of the slide is a photograph of a university campus. It features large, leafy green trees in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, there are multi-story buildings with light-colored facades and dark window frames. Several black lampposts with white globe lights are visible. The entire image has a semi-transparent yellow overlay. A thick yellow horizontal line is positioned above the title text.

INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

The University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Park Campus Plan establishes a focused and flexible framework to guide the long-term evolution of the university's coastal campus in Long Beach. Building on the foundation set by the comprehensive Hattiesburg Campus Plan, this effort translates the university's overarching vision into a plan tailored to Gulf Park's distinct mission, setting, and opportunities. The plan addresses the campus's academic direction, facility renewal needs, open space and mobility improvements, and strategic development priorities that will position Gulf Park for sustained success as an academic and community hub for the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

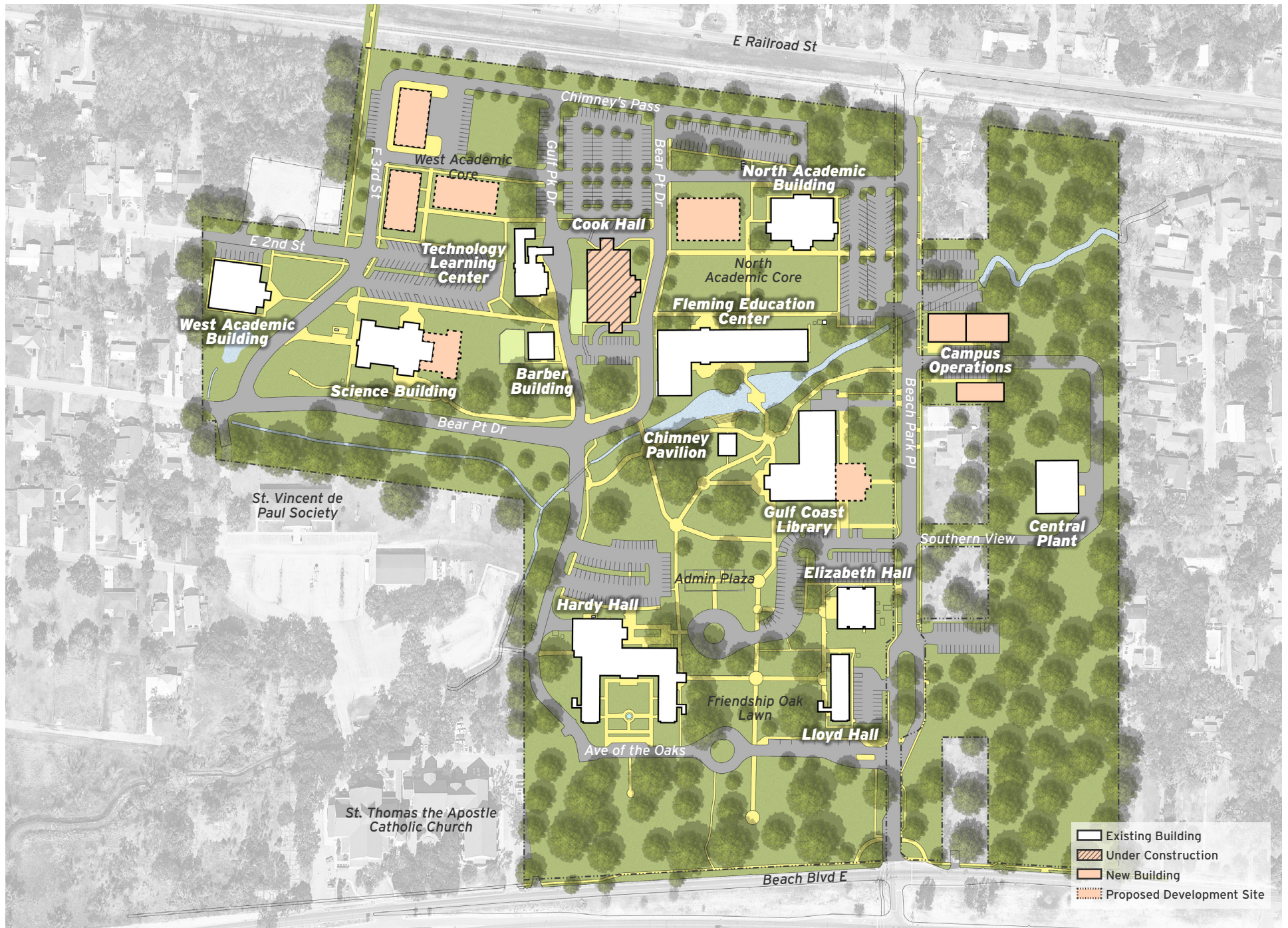
The plan recognizes Gulf Park's unique role within the university system as a center for upper-division, graduate, and professional programs aligned with regional workforce and industry needs. These include expanding opportunities in healthcare, ocean science and engineering, teacher education, and business, disciplines critical to the Gulf Coast economy. Strengthening partnerships with Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC), Pearl River Community College (PRCC), and local employers will expand transfer pathways, continuing education, and executive learning opportunities, further reinforcing the university's presence across the region.

Physically, the plan emphasizes renewal over expansion, focusing on optimizing existing assets and aligning campus facilities with the university's evolving academic mission. The analysis of facility conditions revealed that while most buildings are in fair to good condition, several, such as the Central Plant, Technology Learning Center, and Physical Plant, will require major renewal within the next decade. The plan proposes reinvestment in key facilities, consolidation of dispersed campus operations, and selective divestment of outdated or underutilized structures to create a more efficient, sustainable, and mission-driven campus.

The vision also advances a stronger and more connected campus environment. Enhancements to vehicular and pedestrian circulation will improve access from both Highway 90 and Railroad Street, creating a more welcoming arrival experience for visitors, students, and faculty. The closure of Friendship Oak Drive and creation of new outdoor gathering areas—such as the Hardy Hall courtyard and Friendship Lawn—will reinforce the pedestrian character of the campus and celebrate its natural and historic landscape. Together, these improvements strengthen Gulf Park's sense of place, encourage student engagement, and enhance the daily campus experience.

Implementation of the plan follows a phased approach that balances current initiatives with flexibility for future growth. Current and near-term priorities focus on completing ongoing projects, removing outdated facilities, and developing a program optimization plan to guide space needs. Mid- and long-term phases target key facility renovations, including the Barber Building, Technology Learning Center, and Central Plant, while identifying strategic areas for new development and future opportunity projects, such as potential expansions of the Science Building and Gulf Coast Library.

Ultimately, the Gulf Park Campus Plan provides a clear and adaptable roadmap for the university's coastal campus—one that strengthens its academic mission, invests in its physical environment, and reinforces its role as a gateway to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Through strategic renewal, thoughtful development, and sustained partnerships, Gulf Park will continue to embody USM's commitment to academic excellence, community engagement, and regional impact.



Campus History

The Gulf Park Campus of The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), located in Long Beach, Mississippi, occupies a 52-acre beachfront site shaded by centuries-old live oaks along the Gulf of Mexico. The site's academic legacy began more than a century ago with the founding of Gulf Park College for Women, a private junior college established in 1919 and opened in 1921. Designed by architects Rathbone DeBuys and N.W. Overstreet, the campus was master-planned in the Mission- and Spanish-Revival architectural style, featuring iconic structures such as Hardy Hall, Lloyd Hall, and the Administration Building. The campus quickly became a nationally recognized finishing school for young women from across the South, celebrated for its coastal setting, cultural programming, and the symbolic Friendship Oak, which remains a cherished landmark and enduring emblem of the campus's resilience.

In 1971, following the devastation of Hurricane Camille in 1969 and broader financial challenges in private higher education, Gulf Park College closed its doors. In 1972, the State of Mississippi purchased the property and transferred it to The University of Southern Mississippi, establishing it as USM's coastal campus. The new USM-Gulf Park Campus was envisioned as a regional center serving adult, transfer, and graduate students, initially offering junior- and senior-level courses and graduate programs focused on the needs of the Mississippi Gulf Coast workforce.

Through the late twentieth century, Gulf Park evolved as a hub for education, business, and coastal research, supporting programs in social work, nursing, and marine science, and complementing USM's research enterprises at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs and Stennis Space Center. On August 19, 2002, the campus welcomed its first freshman class, becoming a full four-year campus that allowed students to complete entire degree programs on the coast.

The campus suffered catastrophic losses during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when nearly every building was damaged or destroyed, resulting in more than \$115 million in damages. Academic programs were temporarily relocated, but a determined rebuilding effort followed. Restoration of Hardy Hall, Lloyd Hall, and the Gulf Park Library reaffirmed the university's commitment to maintaining a permanent four-year presence on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Today, Gulf Park stands as the only four-year public institution on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, offering undergraduate and graduate programs in healthcare, business, education, and marine and ocean engineering. Building upon its legacy of coastal education, the campus continues to expand partnerships with local industries, community colleges, and research enterprises—honoring its historic origins while shaping a modern, resilient future for Southern Miss on the Coast.



1980's Gulf Park Campus Aerial



500 Year old Friendship Oak on the Gulf Park campus



Gulf Park Campus, Circa 1920s

Campus Plan Scope and Process

The plan is an extension of USM's comprehensive master planning process, building upon the vision, framework, and guiding principles established for the Hattiesburg Campus. While the Hattiesburg plan focuses on modernizing the university's academic core, reinforcing student life, and optimizing its long-term capital strategy, the Gulf Park plan adapts these principles to the unique context of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, balancing academic growth, coastal research, and community partnership within a dynamic regional setting.

Purpose and Scope

The plan establishes a clear framework to guide near- and long-term decisions about campus development, facility investment, and academic alignment. Building on the principles and priorities defined in the Hattiesburg plan, it focuses on how the physical campus can best support Gulf Park's distinct mission on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The plan evaluates existing campus assets and identifies opportunities to strengthen Gulf Park's role as a center for academic innovation, research, and community engagement. It emphasizes academic and programmatic growth in fields that reflect regional strengths—such as healthcare, ocean science and engineering, business, and education—and highlights ways to enhance collaboration with the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL), Stennis Space Center, and local industry partners.

Equally important, the plan explores opportunities to enhance the student experience, reinforce the campus's welcoming identity along U.S. Highway 90, and create a more connected, vibrant, and purpose-driven environment. It provides a coordinated vision that supports both academic advancement and operational efficiency, positioning Gulf Park as a strategic extension of USM's statewide mission.

Key focus areas include:

- ▶ Optimizing existing facilities and identifying strategic reinvestment priorities
- ▶ Defining opportunities for program growth aligned with regional and workforce demand
- ▶ Enhancing campus identity, arrival experience, and connection to the Gulf of Mexico
- ▶ Improving accessibility, pedestrian safety, and resilience to coastal hazards

Process and Engagement

The planning process followed the same three-phase structure established for the Hattiesburg Plan—Discovery, Ideation, and Synthesis—to ensure coordination across both campuses.

The process included:

- ▶ **Discovery:** Analysis of space, infrastructure, and site conditions; review of program offerings; and listening sessions with Gulf Park stakeholders
- ▶ **Ideation:** Development of alternative planning scenarios to explore options for program growth, facility renewal, and site organization
- ▶ **Synthesis:** Refinement of a preferred campus framework and investment strategy that integrates academic, operational, and capital priorities

Throughout the process, the planning team engaged faculty, staff, and leadership through focus groups, working sessions, and coordination with the Hattiesburg Steering Committee to ensure alignment with the university's systemwide goals. The plan is therefore both a standalone vision for the Gulf Park campus and a complementary component of a unified, forward-looking strategy for USM.



Discovery Survey

As part of the Discovery Phase, a campus-wide survey was distributed to students, faculty, staff, and alumni at USM. Open from April 22 to May 10, 2024, the survey provided an important opportunity to gather broad feedback from the USM community beyond committee and focus group discussions. More than 600 responses were collected, offering insight into how the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses are experienced daily and where improvements are most needed.

Key Takeaways for the Gulf Park Campus

- ▶ The Avenue of the Oaks and Friendship Oak are viewed as the symbolic heart of campus and a defining feature of Gulf Park's identity
- ▶ The beachfront setting and outdoor spaces are highly valued but underutilized for daily campus life and events
- ▶ There is strong interest in enhancing student gathering spaces and amenities that encourage activity before and after class
- ▶ Improved visibility and arrival experience along U.S. Highway 90 are seen as essential to reinforcing campus presence and pride
- ▶ The campus's historic character and coastal landscape are central to its appeal and should guide future design and development



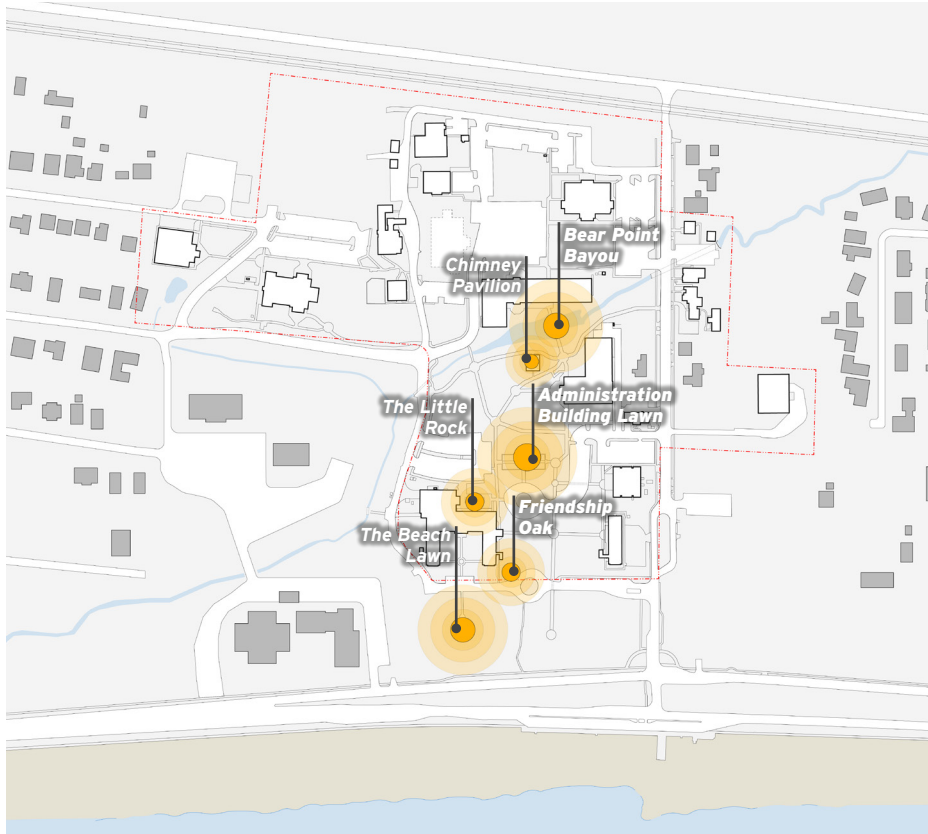
Gulf Park Picnic



Bear Point Bayou



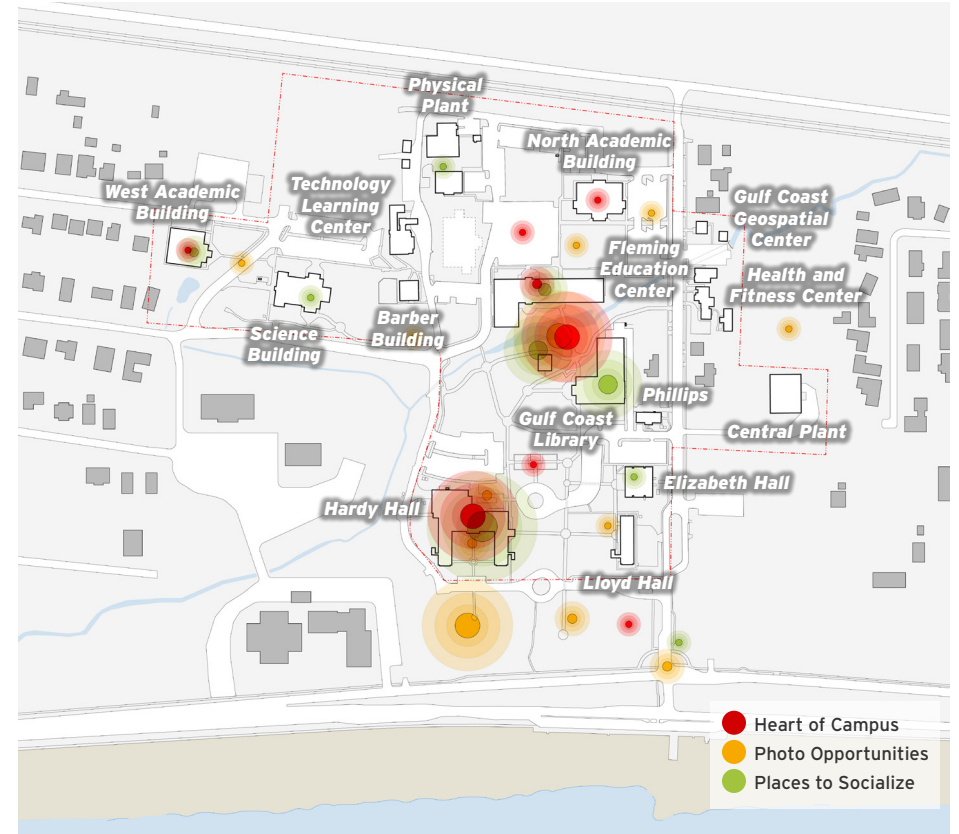
Chimney Pavilion



Heat map results of "Special Spaces on Campus" survey question

Special Spaces

The Gulf Park campus is defined by its historic architecture and signature open spaces that create a distinctive sense of place. Iconic landmarks such as the Friendship Oak and the surrounding coastal landscape draw visitors from across the region and contribute to the campus's unique character and identity.



Heat map results of "Campus Character" survey questions

Campus Character

Survey responses highlight the spaces that define Gulf Park's sense of place and campus life. The heat map reveals concentrations of activity and sentiment around the Chimney Pavilion, Bear Point Bayou, Hardy Hall, the Beach Lawn, and the Gulf Coast Library, areas recognized as the heart of campus, favorite social destinations, and the most memorable photo locations.



A photograph of a park with large, leafy trees and several black lampposts. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue rectangle. A thick yellow horizontal line is positioned above the text.

PLANNING FOUNDATION

Related Planning Efforts

The plan builds upon a series of prior studies and ongoing initiatives that have shaped the university's coastal presence over the past decade. These include earlier campus master planning efforts, systemwide facility renewal assessments, and coordination with external partners on mobility, infrastructure, and coastal research. Together, these related planning efforts provide essential context for the current plan, offering lessons learned, identifying enduring priorities, and establishing a framework from which the Gulf Park campus can continue to evolve strategically and sustainably within the broader USM system.



Campus Master Plan (2012)

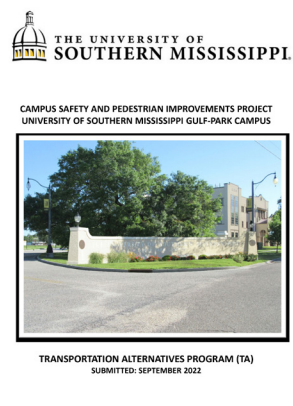
The 2012 Gulf Park Campus Master Plan provided the foundational framework upon which the current planning effort builds. Developed in the years following Hurricane Katrina, it reestablished Gulf Park as the university's primary coastal campus and articulated a vision that balanced historic preservation, academic growth, and environmental resilience. The plan reinforced the Avenue of the Oaks as the defining spine of the campus, linking the beachfront, academic core, and northern edge through a cohesive open space and pedestrian framework. It emphasized maintaining the park-like coastal landscape while improving accessibility and circulation.

The 2012 plan also introduced a land use and facilities strategy that continues to inform Gulf Park's development today. It identified Hardy, Lloyd, and Elizabeth Halls as priority renovation projects and proposed new academic and research facilities on the northern portion of campus to support long-term program growth. The relocation of back-of-house and service functions—such as the Physical Plant—away from prominent campus areas was recommended to improve arrival experiences and free central land for academic use. Many of the plan's principles, including preserving historic assets, enhancing connectivity, and promoting sustainable, coastal-appropriate design, remain central to the 2025 plan, which advances these ideas toward a more strategic, mission-driven vision for Gulf Park's future.



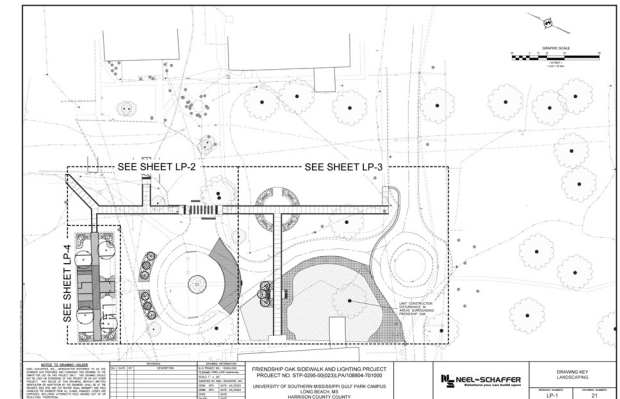
Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2017)

The Gulf Park Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan outlined a comprehensive strategy to enhance safety, connectivity, and walkability across the university's coastal campus. It proposed a cohesive network of sidewalks, promenades, and shared-use paths linking key destinations such as Hardy Hall, the Gulf Coast Library, and the Fleming Education Center. The plan introduced consistent design standards and a phased implementation strategy, prioritizing new sidewalks, raised crosswalks, and accessible routes in the near term, followed by major projects like the Coastal and Academic Promenades and a future Bear Bayou Nature Park. Together, these improvements aimed to create a safe, unified, and pedestrian-friendly environment that strengthens Gulf Park's connection to the surrounding Long Beach community.



Campus Safety and Pedestrian Improvements Project (2022)

The Campus Safety and Pedestrian Improvements Project proposed a series of enhancements to improve walkability, safety, and connectivity across the Gulf Park campus. Funded through the Transportation Alternatives Program, the project aimed to replace temporary barricades with permanent gates at major entrances, allowing the campus to function as a fully pedestrian zone during events, closures, or flooding. It also introduced a new, more prominent gateway at the West 3rd Street entrance, strengthening connections to downtown Long Beach and linking with existing MDOT pathway networks. The improvements were designed to create a safer, more attractive, and more connected campus environment that supports both university life and broader community engagement.



Friendship Oak Sidewalk and Lighting Project (2025)

The Friendship Oak Sidewalk and Lighting Project enhances one of Gulf Park's most iconic and cherished areas by transforming the space around the historic tree into a fully pedestrian-focused environment. The plan removes the existing roadway in front of the Friendship Oak to establish a direct, accessible pedestrian connection between Hardy Hall and Lloyd Hall. New pedestrian-scale lighting and pathways will improve safety and visibility while emphasizing the Oak as a central gathering space. Additionally, the adjacent administrative area will be converted into a small pocket park—creating a welcoming, shaded setting that celebrates the Friendship Oak's legacy and strengthens the heart of the Gulf Park campus.

Focus Group Insights

Stakeholder engagement revealed a shared vision for Gulf Park as a center for upper-division, graduate, and executive education programs that meet regional workforce needs. Discussions emphasized healthcare, ocean science and engineering, business, and education as programmatic priorities. Faculty and staff highlighted the campus's underutilized assets and the opportunity to increase enrollment through targeted transfer pathways, continuing education, and professional development programs.

The campus community expressed strong support for improved arrival experiences, enhanced pedestrian connections, and activation of outdoor spaces. The lack of student life amenities and housing was recognized as a constraint, particularly for international and graduate students, though stakeholders agreed that Gulf Park should remain a commuter and professional campus rather than a residential one.



Gulf Coast Library



Lloyd Hall



Hardy Hall Colonnade

Academic and Research Priorities

Participants emphasized the importance of aligning Gulf Park's academic offerings with regional workforce and economic needs. Growth opportunities were identified in biology, marine science, ocean engineering, nursing, business, social work, and psychology, as well as emerging fields such as cybersecurity and criminal justice. Expanding healthcare-related programs including speech and hearing, occupational therapy, and physical therapy was identified as a major priority. Stakeholders also highlighted the opportunity to strengthen collaboration between Gulf Park, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL), and Stennis by consolidating and integrating related research and instructional activities across the coastal sites.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Most facilities were described as being in fair to good condition, with adequate capacity to support additional programs. However, participants stressed the need to "right-size" the campus to reflect its focused mission and modernize aging infrastructure. The development of a regional conference or executive education center was viewed as a key opportunity to enhance community partnerships and professional learning. Maintaining historic facilities while addressing deferred maintenance was cited as an ongoing challenge. Stakeholders also recommended improving access across the railroad, relocating or consolidating back-of-house operations near the central plant, and creating more integrated student support and collaboration spaces.

Student Life and Campus Experience

The discussions underscored a shared desire to strengthen campus life and engagement opportunities. While university leadership has confirmed that on-campus housing is not part of the Gulf Park vision, participants emphasized the importance of creating a more vibrant and connected campus experience through other means. Feedback highlighted opportunities to enhance arrival experiences, activate outdoor spaces, and create a welcoming, community-oriented environment that supports student engagement and belonging.

Mobility and Access

While the campus's compact scale and mature canopy create a comfortable pedestrian environment, stakeholders identified several opportunities for improvement. Enhancements to sidewalks, wayfinding, parking organization, and gateway visibility, particularly at the northern rail crossing, were seen as essential to improving safety and reinforcing campus identity. Consolidating parking at the campus periphery and strengthening the pedestrian network were also recommended to create a more cohesive and accessible campus core.

Collectively, these focus group insights articulate a clear vision for Gulf Park's evolution as a vibrant, mission-driven coastal campus, one that advances USM's academic and research enterprise, modernizes facilities and infrastructure, and fosters a connected, active, and resilient environment that reflects the university's presence on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Gulf Park Campus Today

The Gulf Park campus is a distinctive coastal setting that reflects both the history and the future of USM. Its location along the Long Beach shoreline defines its identity as a place of academic distinction, community connection, and coastal resilience. Understanding the campus in its broader geographic, environmental, and community context is essential to shaping its next phase of development.

The following diagrams illustrate the factors that influence how the campus functions today—its regional position within USM’s Gulf Coast network, its local setting within the Long Beach community, and the environmental conditions that shape its development potential. Together, these perspectives highlight Gulf Park’s strategic role within the university’s system and the physical opportunities and constraints that inform its long-term vision.



Regional campus context

Regional Campus Context

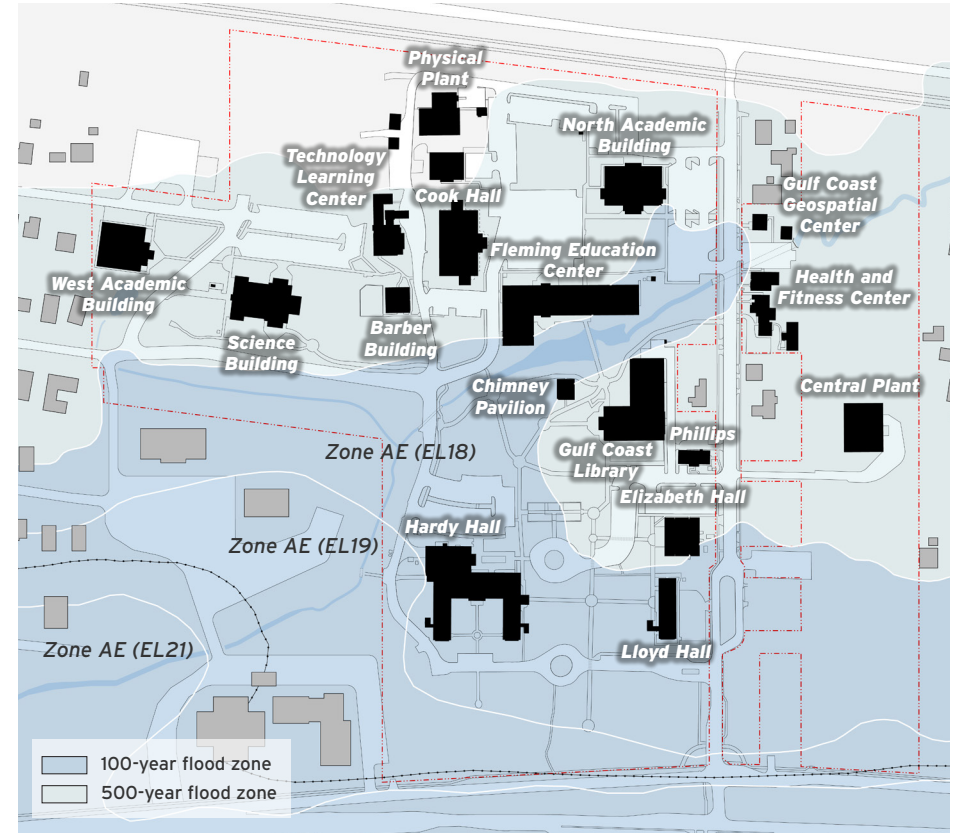
The Gulf Park campus serves as USM's academic anchor on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, centrally positioned among the university's coastal research sites—including Stennis, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, the Port of Gulfport, Point Cadet, and Cedar Point—forming a connected network that advances education, research, and innovation across the region.



Gulf Park campus context

Campus Context

Located along the Long Beach coastline, the Gulf Park campus is a prominent community landmark that blends academic, research, and administrative functions within a distinctive coastal setting. The campus is bordered by single-family neighborhoods to the north, east, and west, with a commercial corridor and rail line defining its northern edge and connecting it to the broader Long Beach community.



FEMA designated flood zones

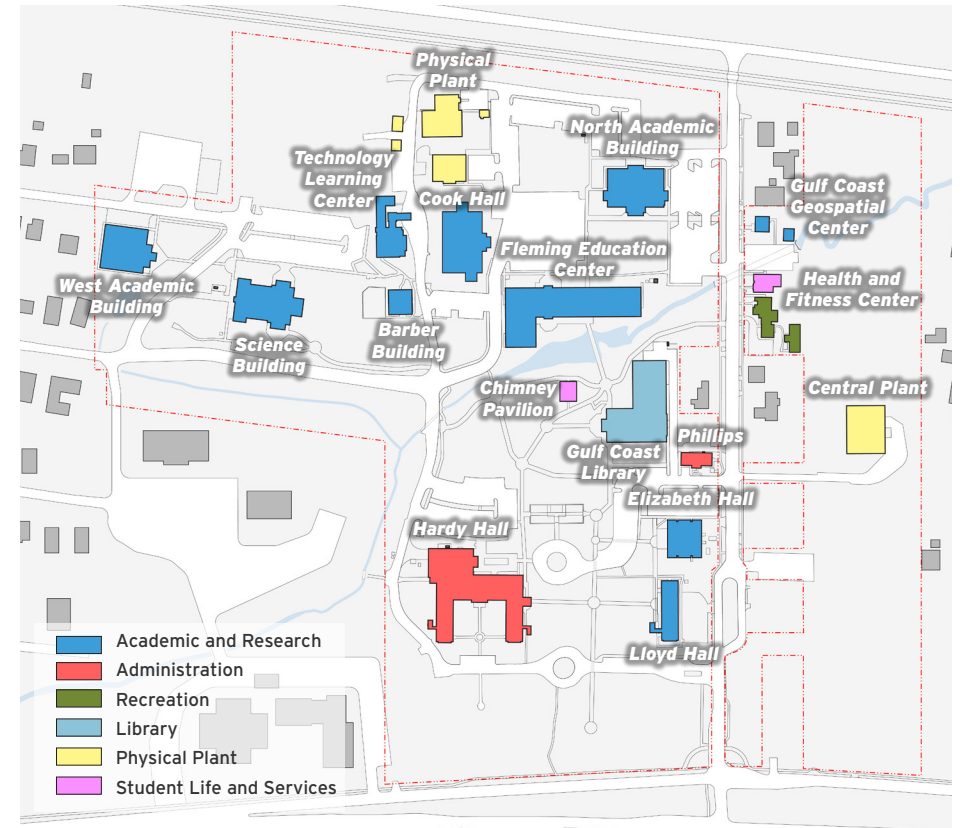
Floodplains

Much of the Gulf Park campus lies within FEMA-designated flood zones, with the historic core situated in the 100-year Zone AE high-risk area and nearly all remaining portions within the 500-year flood zone. The northwest portion of campus, located on higher ground, represents the most suitable area for future development given these floodplain constraints.

Facility Analysis

The facility analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how Gulf Park's buildings support the university's academic mission and long-term operational goals. Drawing on data from the facility condition assessment completed at the start of the planning effort, this analysis evaluates both current building use and anticipated renewal needs across the campus.

The following diagrams illustrate the organization of existing building functions and projected facility condition index (FCI) values over three- and ten-year timeframes. Together, these assessments highlight facilities that are performing well today, those that will require targeted maintenance or modernization in the near term, and others where strategic reinvestment or potential divestment may be the most appropriate course of action.



Existing building use

Use

The current organization of building uses effectively supports Gulf Park's academic and administrative functions; however, physical plant operations are dispersed and occupy high-value land better suited for future development. Additionally, out-parcels along Beach Park Place limit opportunities for campus expansion and more cohesive site planning.



Projected three-year facility condition index (FCI)

Projected Three-Year FCI

Short-term facility condition projections align with stakeholder observations, confirming the need for targeted reinvestment in select core buildings. Focused maintenance and renewal within the next three years will help sustain overall campus functionality and prevent deferred maintenance from escalating.



Projected ten-year facility condition index (FCI)

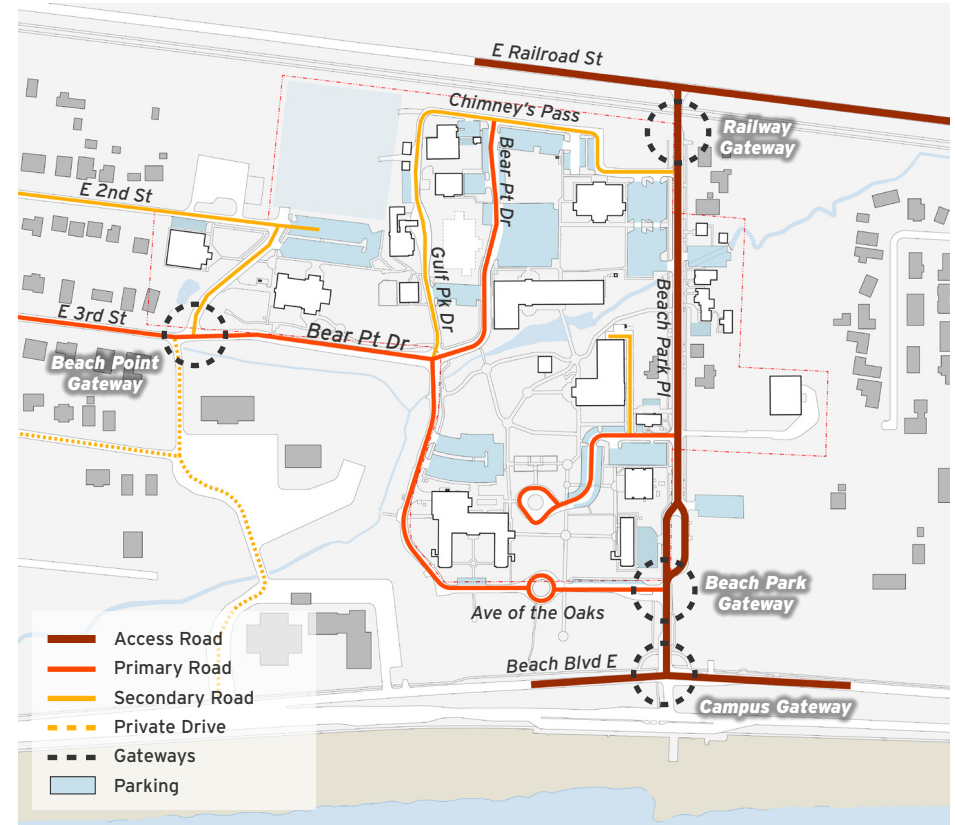
Projected Ten-Year FCI

Over the next decade, the Central Plant and Gulf Coast Geospatial Center are expected to experience the greatest decline in condition, though the university has already decided to divest of the Geospatial Center. The Health and Fitness Center, Physical Plant, and Technology Learning Center also show elevated renewal needs. While phased reinvestment will be required in select buildings, strategic divestment may be more appropriate for facilities whose renewal costs outweigh long-term value.

Site Analysis

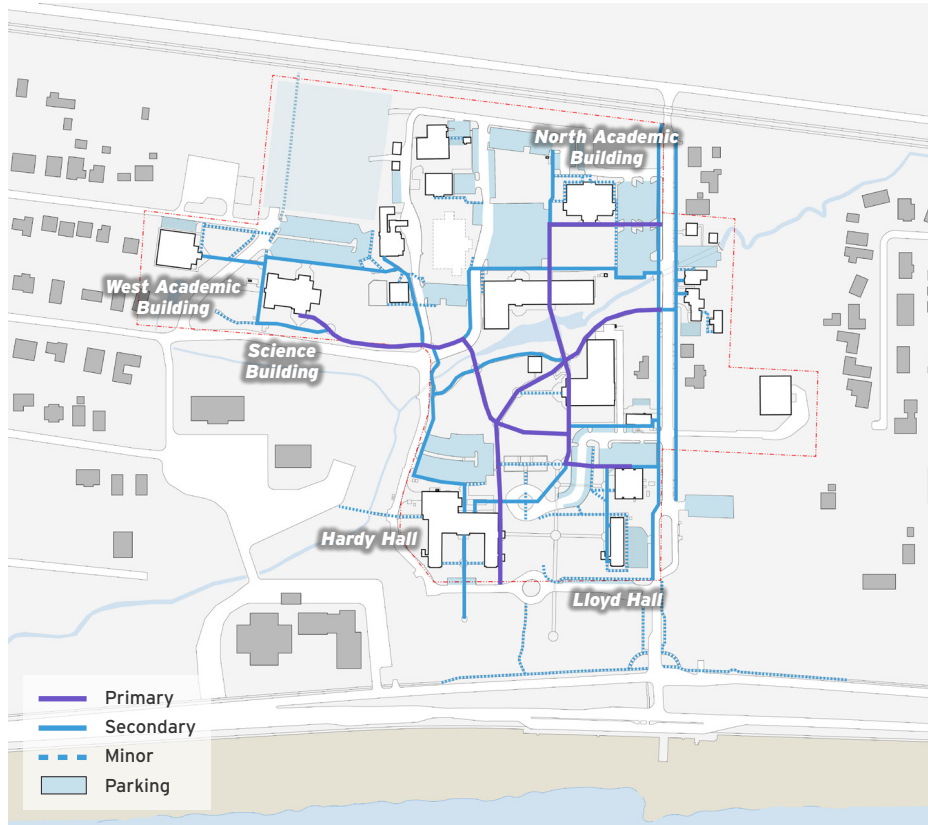
The Gulf Park campus is defined by its coastal setting, historic landscape, and compact, pedestrian-friendly layout. The site analysis examines how people and vehicles move through and experience the campus today, highlighting opportunities to improve access, connectivity, and the quality of outdoor spaces.

Vehicular circulation is shaped by the campus's context, bounded by quiet residential streets, Highway 90 to the south, and the rail line to the north. While Beach Park Place serves as the primary entrance, other access points would benefit from clearer hierarchy and improved wayfinding. Pedestrian circulation is strong and supported by a mature tree canopy that enhances comfort and walkability across campus, though targeted sidewalk and gateway enhancements can further strengthen connectivity. Open spaces, ranging from the historic Friendship Oak and Friendship Lawn to the Bayou, Beach Boulevard, and Chimney Pavilion, define Gulf Park's character and coastal identity. Collectively, these elements form the foundation for future improvements that will enhance access, safety, and the overall campus experience.



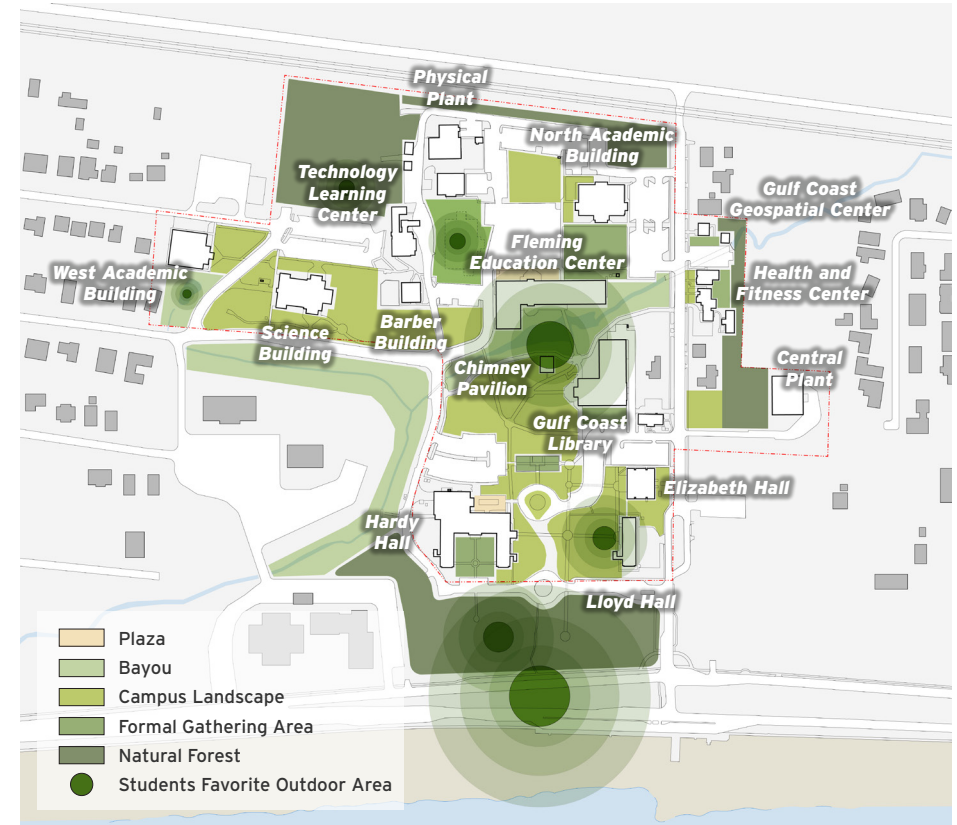
Vehicular Circulation and Access

The campus is bordered by quiet residential streets, Highway 90 to the south, and Railroad Street to the north. Most vehicles enter from Beach Park Place, which functions as the primary gateway for students and visitors. The northern entrance along Railroad Street lacks a strong sense of arrival and should be enhanced to serve as a true campus gateway. Over time, parking consolidation at the campus edges is recommended to reduce internal traffic, improve safety, and strengthen the pedestrian character of the campus core.



Pedestrian Circulation

Gulf Park's compact layout and extensive tree canopy make it a highly walkable campus with comfortable outdoor conditions year-round. The existing pedestrian network functions effectively, providing strong connectivity between major destinations. Targeted sidewalk improvements in select areas are recommended to enhance accessibility, safety, and continuity across the campus.



Open Space

Gulf Park's open spaces are a defining feature of its coastal identity, offering a blend of natural beauty and historic character. Favorite outdoor areas identified by students include the Beach Boulevard edge, the Chimney Pavilion at Bear Bayou Point, and the Friendship Lawn, each contributing to the campus's sense of place and connection to the Gulf Coast. The landscape encompasses a variety of open space typologies, including natural forest areas, courtyards and gardens, and bayou edges, together forming a diverse and memorable outdoor environment that supports learning and community gathering.



CAMPUS PLAN VISION

Gulf Park Campus Vision

The Gulf Park campus vision plan presents a forward-looking framework that positions USM's coastal campus for academic excellence, operational efficiency, and long-term resilience. It is both a continuation of the university's systemwide planning efforts and a recognition of Gulf Park's unique role as a center for coastal education, research, and community engagement.

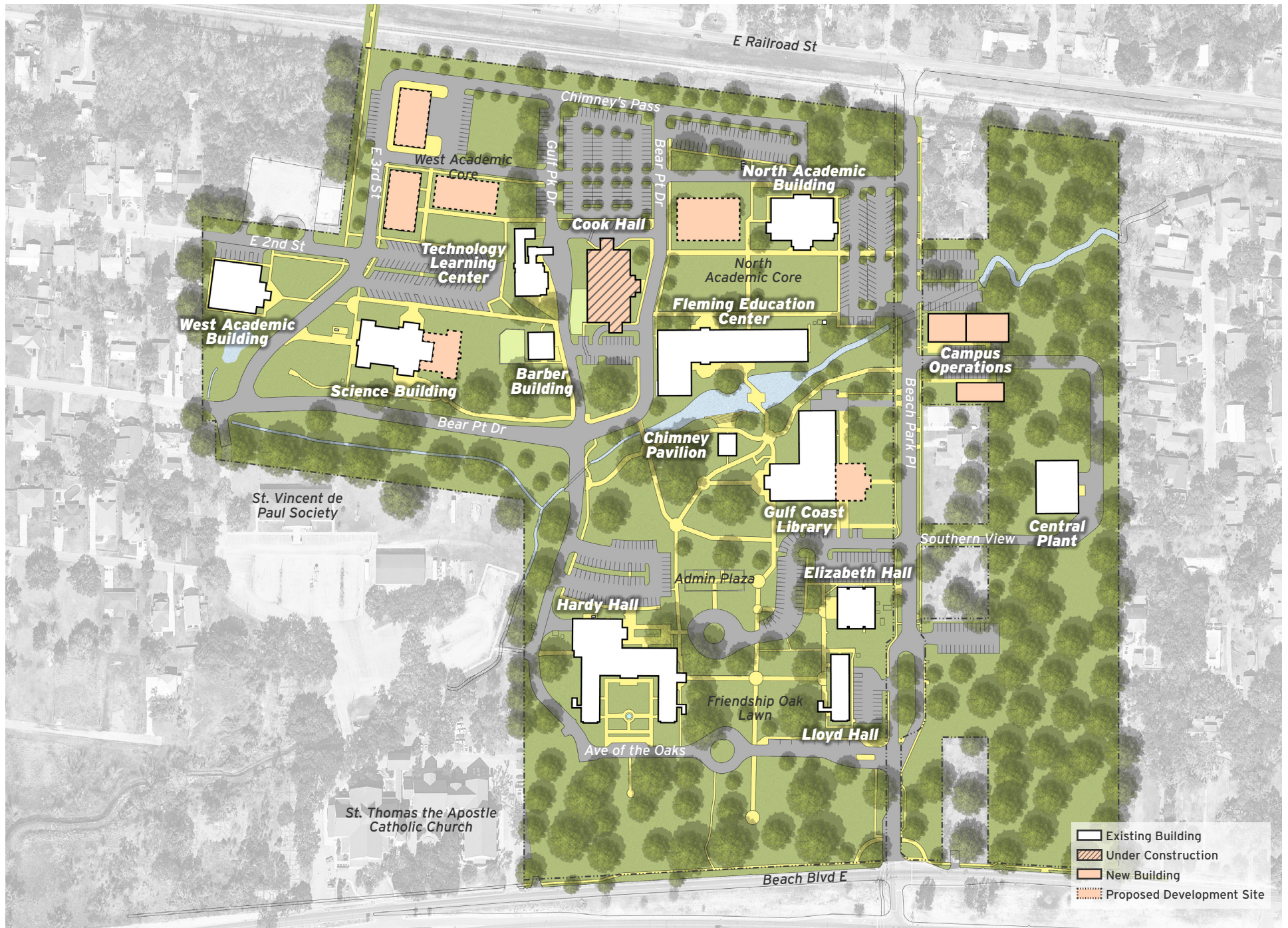
The vision for Gulf Park builds on its enduring assets, a historic and resilient setting along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, a cohesive academic core shaped by its live oak landscape, and a growing portfolio of programs that respond directly to regional and statewide workforce needs. The plan envisions a campus that is right-sized for its mission, strategically reinvested to support future academic and research growth, and better connected to its surrounding community. By focusing on program alignment, facility renewal, and a thoughtful approach to development, the plan ensures that Gulf Park will continue to serve as a vital gateway for the university's coastal presence.

Academically, the vision strengthens Gulf Park's role as a hub for upper-division, graduate, and executive education programs in health sciences, business, ocean engineering, and teacher education fields that advance the coastal economy and workforce. The plan's flexible development sites allow for the growth of existing programs or future consolidation of complementary academic and research functions from other coastal locations, ensuring Gulf Park remains adaptable to the university's evolving needs.

Physically, the campus vision emphasizes renewal over expansion. It prioritizes reinvestment in existing facilities, the relocation of back-of-house operations to less prominent areas, and the divestment of outdated or underutilized structures to free valuable land for future growth. The resulting campus will be more efficient, sustainable, and aligned with its academic mission. Key facility improvements, such as modernization of core academic buildings, the introduction of a conference center in Hardy Hall, and strategic renovations to the Central Plant and Technology Learning Center, will enhance campus performance and extend the life of critical assets.

Mobility and open space improvements reinforce the character and connectivity that make Gulf Park distinct. Enhanced gateways from Highway 90 and Railroad Street, consolidated parking at the campus edges, and improved pedestrian pathways will create a safer and more inviting arrival sequence. The closure of Friendship Oak Drive and development of new open spaces, including the Hardy Hall courtyard and west and north academic lawns, will strengthen the pedestrian core and celebrate the campus's natural and historic features.

Together, these strategies form a cohesive vision for Gulf Park, one that honors its history, leverages its location, and advances its academic mission through thoughtful design and stewardship. The campus envisioned in this plan is one that is more connected, resilient, and student-centered, ensuring that Gulf Park continues to serve as both a symbol of the university's legacy and a catalyst for its future growth along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



Planning Goals

The planning goals for the Gulf Park Campus Plan provide a framework for guiding future development, investment, and stewardship of the university's coastal campus. Building on the broader vision established for the Hattiesburg campus, these goals are tailored to Gulf Park's distinct mission, scale, and regional role within the USM system. They focus on aligning academic programs with coastal workforce needs, optimizing facilities to support strategic growth, improving campus arrival and identity, and ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. Together, these goals position Gulf Park to strengthen its academic and research presence on the Mississippi Gulf Coast while enhancing the daily experience of students, faculty, and visitors.



Strengthen Gulf Park's Academic Mission and Identity

- ▶ Focus Gulf Park's mission on upper-division, graduate, and executive education aligned with regional workforce demands
- ▶ Prioritize programs in healthcare, ocean science and engineering, teacher education, and business
- ▶ Advance academic offerings that align with the coastal job market



Optimize Campus Facilities for Strategic Growth

- ▶ Relocate and consolidate back-of-house functions, currently located on the northern edge of campus, to the area north of the central plant to make higher-valued land available for future development
- ▶ Demolish underutilized structures along Beach Park Place to enhance campus arrival and remove buildings that no longer meet program needs
- ▶ Reconfigure Fleming, Elizabeth, and Lloyd Halls to accommodate projected growth in academic programs, including health professions



Enhance Campus Arrival and Create a Welcoming First Impression

- ▶ Improve vehicular and pedestrian entry points from Railroad Street and Highway 90 in collaboration with the City of Long Beach
- ▶ Strengthen gateway identity and wayfinding to clearly define campus entrances and improve orientation
- ▶ Create outdoor gathering and study spaces to enhance the student experience, especially near the library and historic core
- ▶ Integrate landscaping, lighting, and branding elements to activate key arrival points and reinforce campus character



Promote Sustainability and Long-Term Stewardship

- ▶ Develop a strategy for adaptive reuse and space utilization that aligns with program growth, enrollment changes, and facility condition
- ▶ Preserve historic structures and landscape character while enabling modern upgrades and future flexibility
- ▶ Avoid new development in flood-prone areas and leverage the campus's highest ground for critical infrastructure

Building Renewal

The Building Renewal framework outlines a long-term strategy for reinvestment, modernization, and strategic realignment of facilities to support Gulf Park's evolving academic mission. This section builds on the findings of the facility condition assessment to identify opportunities for renewal, consolidation, and targeted new development.

The plans that follow illustrate how reinvestment in key facilities, strategic relocation of campus operations, and selective new construction will position Gulf Park for future growth. The Facility Renewal Plan focuses on optimizing existing assets, addressing deferred maintenance, and improving efficiency through consolidation and adaptive reuse. The Proposed Building Use Plan extends this framework by identifying future development zones, operational realignments, and strategic land acquisitions that enhance access, flexibility, and the overall campus experience. Together, these initiatives provide a roadmap for a more efficient, resilient, and mission-aligned Gulf Park campus.



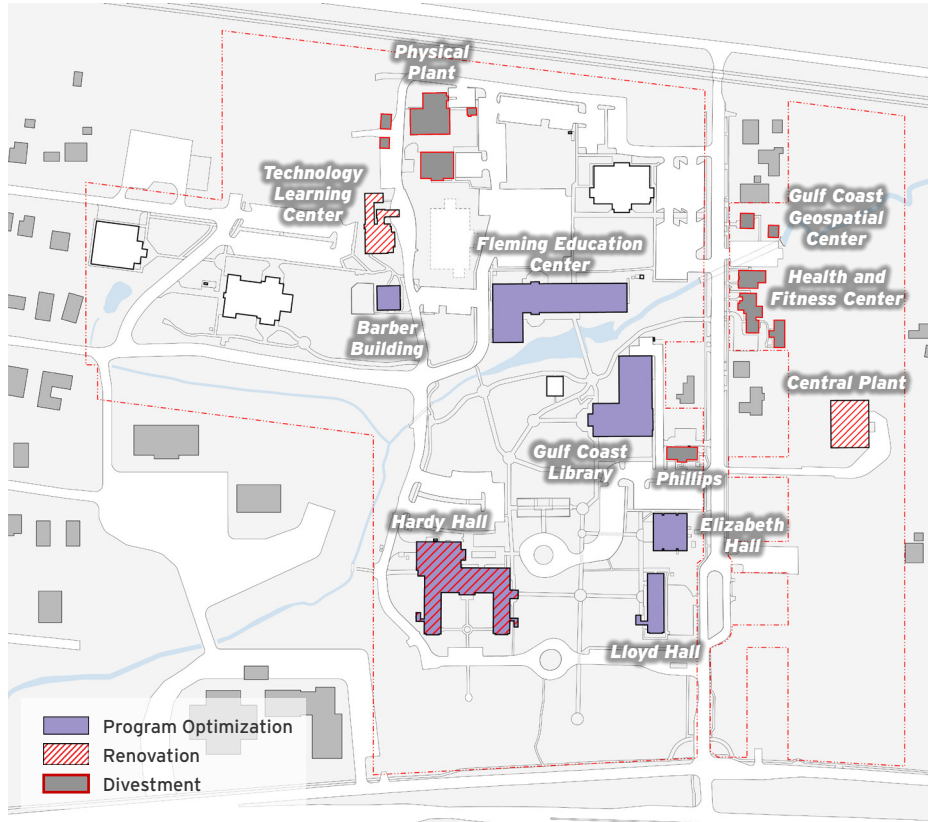
Technology Learning Center



Physical Plant

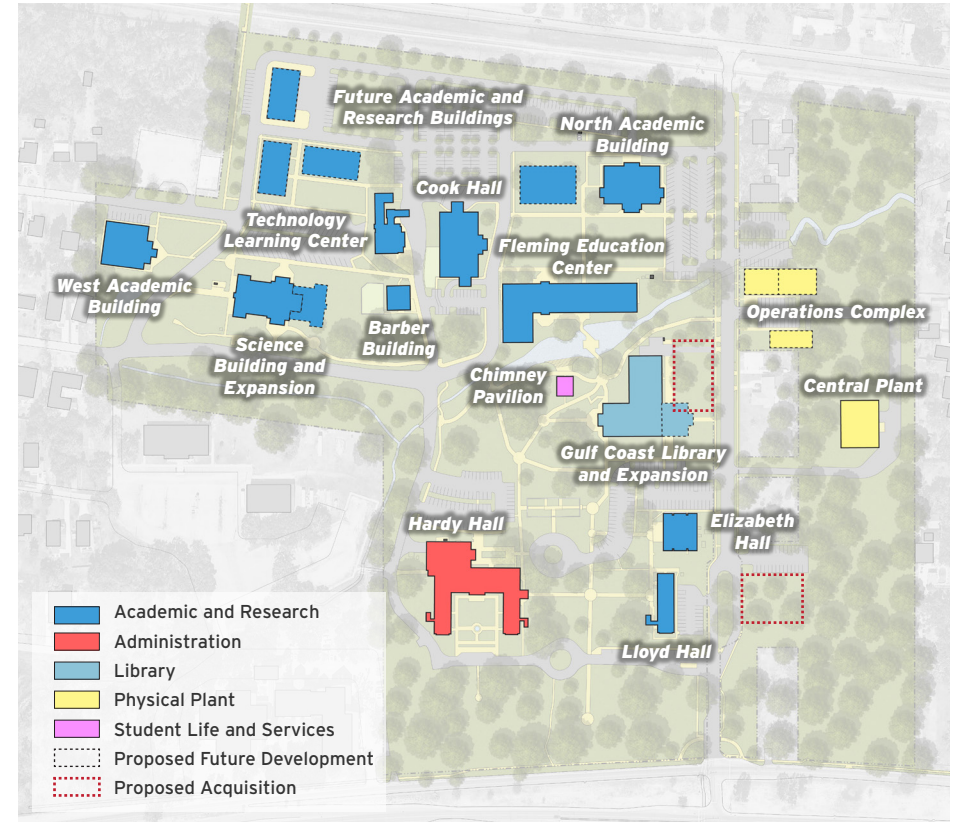


*University Police Department and Department of
Parking and Transit Services*



Building Renewal Plan

A phased approach to facility renewal aligns Gulf Park's buildings with future academic and operational needs. Former residential structures along Beach Park Place will be divested, and physical plant, police, and campus operations will be relocated and consolidated east of Beach Park Place. Fleming, Elizabeth, and Lloyd Halls will be modernized to accommodate projected growth and new academic programs as they are further defined. Hardy Hall will implement the planned conference facility program. The Barber Building will be reused for priority needs once Cook Hall is fully occupied. Additional student center functions will be accommodated within the library, and the Technology Learning Center and Central Plant will be renovated to improve efficiency and reliability.



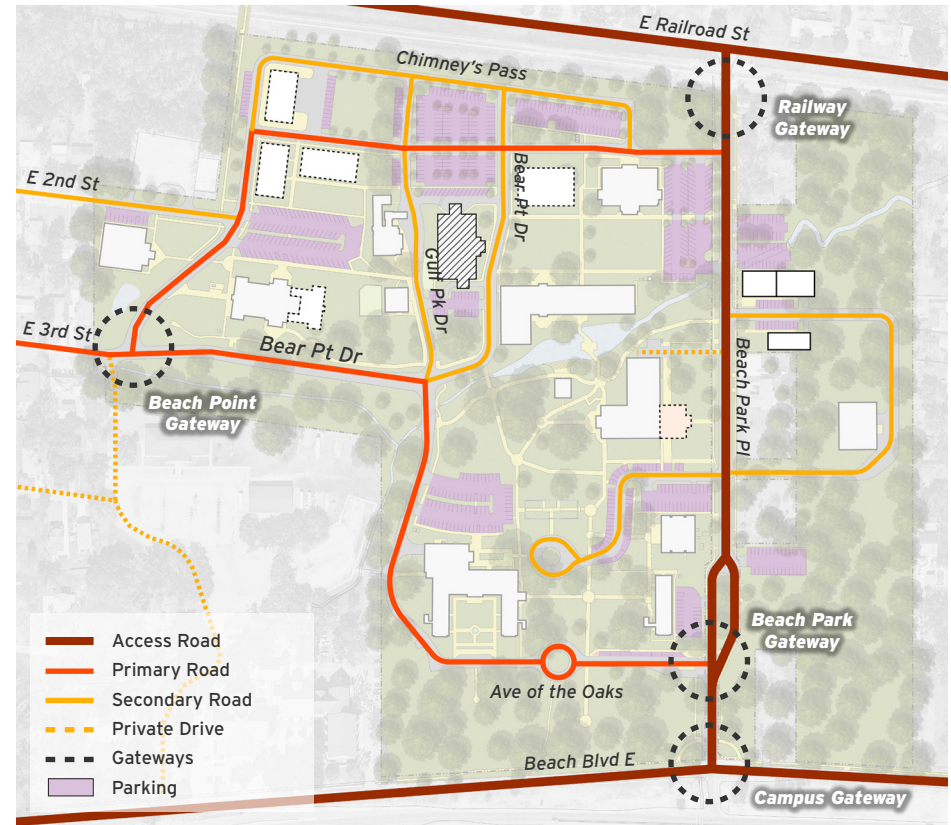
Proposed Building Use

The proposed building use plan envisions new flexible academic and research facilities within the northwest portion of campus to support future program growth. A new consolidated campus operations district will improve efficiency and free central land for academic use. Strategic acquisition of the out-parcel adjacent to the library will create a more inviting campus access point, while acquisition of the parcel opposite Lloyd Hall will enable improved entrance circulation and preserve mature trees along the gateway.

Mobility and Open Space

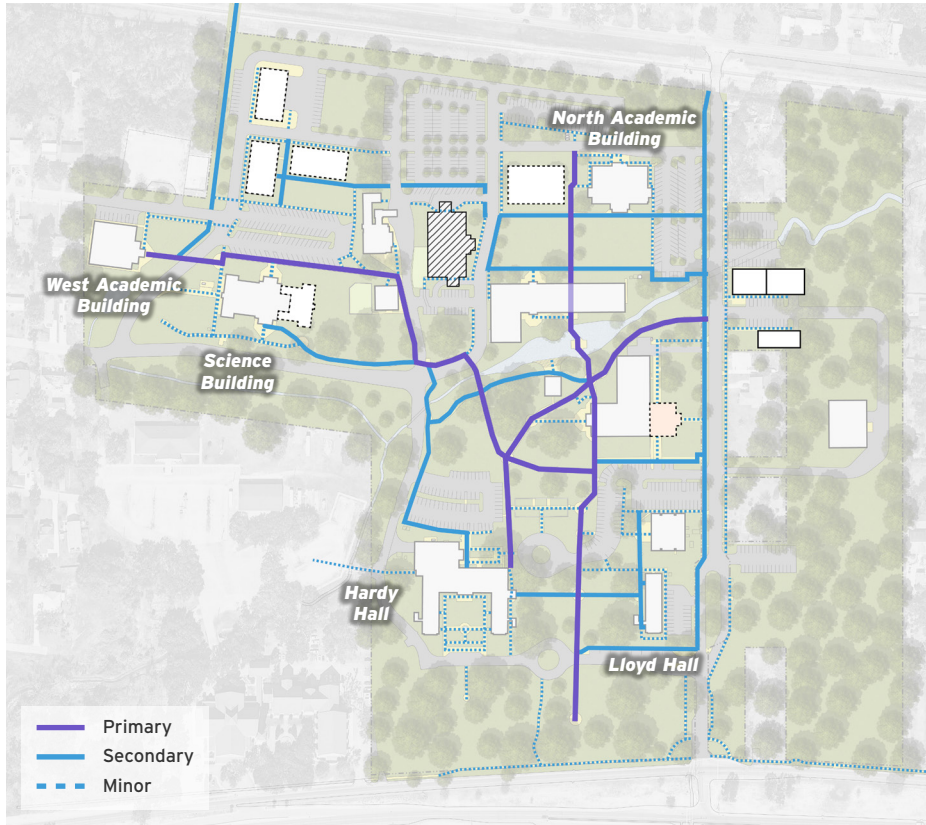
The Mobility and Open Space framework envisions a more connected, accessible, and welcoming Gulf Park campus that celebrates its coastal landscape and enhances the daily experience for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Building on the campus's compact scale and walkable layout, the framework strengthens circulation systems and open spaces to create a safer, more cohesive environment that supports both movement and gathering.

Planned improvements focus on establishing clear and welcoming gateways, improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and reinforcing the campus's unique sense of place through landscape and open space enhancements. Together, these strategies create a balanced mobility network, one that prioritizes pedestrians, enhances multimodal access, and preserves the character of Gulf Park's historic and natural setting.



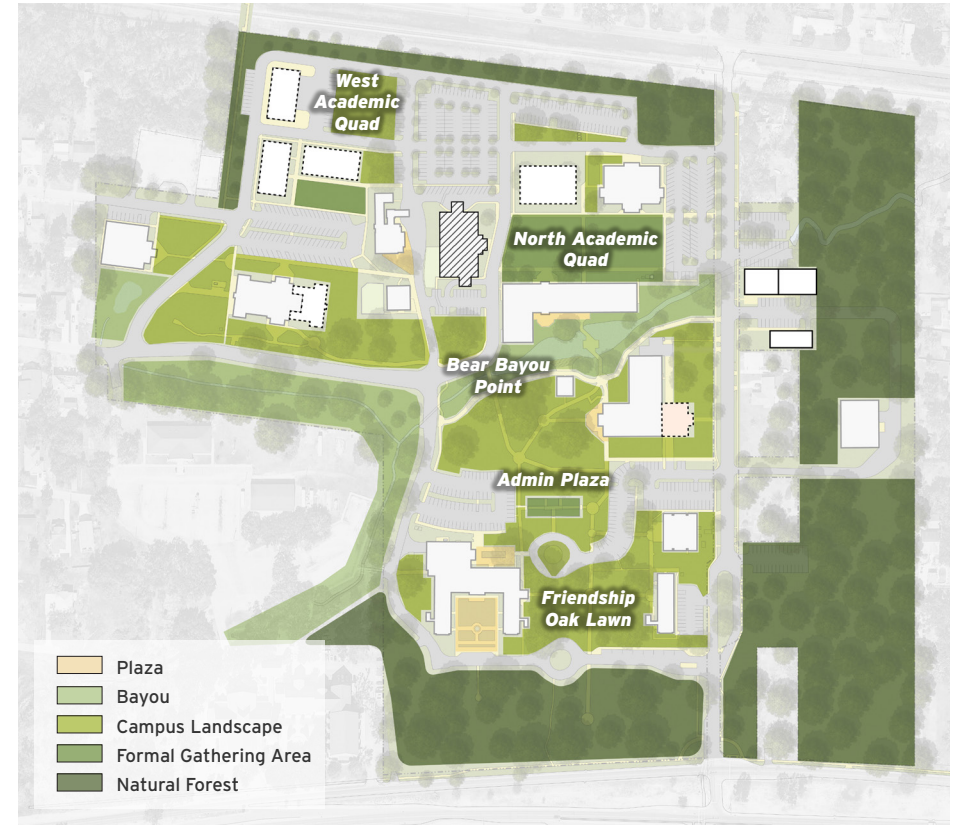
Vehicular Circulation and Access

Enhanced gateways and a refined vehicular network create a more welcoming and efficient arrival experience at Gulf Park. A new gateway and improved road from Beach Boulevard provide convenient access to future development areas, while the primary circulation network connects major destinations and parking areas. A secondary internal network supports efficient navigation throughout campus and reinforces the hierarchy of campus streets.



Pedestrian Circulation

The proposed pedestrian circulation network strengthens connectivity across campus with major north-south and east-west pathways linking key destinations. New defined walkways in the north campus area support future development and extend access beyond the campus edge. Minor paths enhance connections between buildings and parking areas, while improvements to the Bayou bridge and new stair access create opportunities for pedestrians to engage with the water and surrounding landscape.



Open Space

The proposed open space plan preserves and enhances Gulf Park's existing landscape framework while introducing new spaces that strengthen campus character and connectivity. A new courtyard at Hardy Hall will support planned programming within the building, and closure of Friendship Oak Drive will create a continuous open space connection between Hardy and Lloyd Halls. Additional landscape and open space improvements in the northern portion of campus will establish a more inviting environment and reinforce a cohesive sense of place.



IMPLEMENTATION

Phased Project Approach

The implementation plan outlines a phased approach to campus investment over the next decade. It prioritizes near-term priorities while allowing the campus to adapt to evolving academic needs, enrollment trends, and funding opportunities.

- ▶ **Current Implementation** efforts focus on key projects already in progress, including the full occupation of Cook Hall, completion of Hardy Hall renovations and courtyard enhancements, and closure of Friendship Oak Circle with new Friendship Lawn improvements.
- ▶ **Near-Term (0-3 Years)** priorities address critical space and program realignment needs. These include the demolition of the Gulf Coast Geospatial Center and Health and Fitness Center facilities and the development of a comprehensive program optimization plan informed by the Degree Plan Inventory Review Report.
- ▶ **Mid-Term (3-6 Years)** initiatives emphasize reinvestment and operational efficiency. The Barber Building will be renovated and repurposed for emerging academic or administrative needs, a new campus operations complex will be developed, and existing physical plant facilities and Phillips Hall will be demolished to open land for a higher and better use.

- ▶ **Long-Term (6-10 Years)** projects focus on modernization and renewal of core infrastructure. Planned work includes renovation of the Technology Learning Center and the Central Plant to extend their service life and improve operational performance.
- ▶ **Future Opportunity Projects** represent flexible initiatives that may advance as program demand and resources allow. These include potential expansions of the Science Building and Gulf Coast Library, development of future academic and research facilities, and the acquisition of key out-parcels along Beach Park Place to support long-term campus growth.

This phased approach provides a clear path for decision-making while allowing flexibility to adapt to changing conditions. Together, these projects will ensure that Gulf Park continues to evolve strategically, supporting the university's mission, optimizing resources, and enhancing its role as a vibrant academic hub on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.



Hardy Hall Courtyard



Gulf Coast Library

Phase	Projects
Current Implementation	▶ Full occupation of Cook Hall ▶ Complete Hardy Hall renovation and courtyard enhancements ▶ Complete Friendship Oak Circle closure and Friendship Lawn enhancements
Near-Term (0-3 Years)	▶ Develop program optimization plan based on the Degree Plan Inventory Review Report ▶ Demolish Gulf Coast Geospatial Center facilities ▶ Demolish Health and Fitness Center facilities
Mid-Term (3-6 Years)	▶ Renovate and repurpose the Barber Building ▶ Develop new campus operations complex ▶ Demolish physical plant facilities and Phillips Hall
Long-Term (6-10 Years)	▶ Renovate the Technology Learning Center ▶ Renovate the Central Plant
Future Opportunity Projects	▶ Science Building expansion ▶ Gulf Coast Library expansion ▶ Future academic and research buildings ▶ Acquisition of out-parcels along Beach Park Place

