EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLAN BIG: 2013 CAMPUS AND LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN
Plan Big creates a vision for growth on both City and East Campuses.
In June 2012, the University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL) launched Plan Big: UNL Campus and Landscape Master Plan, which will guide the University’s growth over the next fifteen years and beyond. Emblematic of the name is the significance of this plan for the University, which is occurring at a time of ambitious growth aspirations, a new position within the Big Ten conference, and new visions for UNL’s campus and landscape identity. It is truly a pivotal moment for the University. As Chancellor Harvey Perlman states on the Plan Big website, “I’m sure most of us can sense the momentum of our University—there’s evidence everywhere of growth.”

The Plan Big master plan provides a framework for this growth to ensure the highest quality campus learning environments are created to help the University achieve its goals and mission. As Nebraska’s only land-grant, comprehensive, research university, UNL’s mission is to teach, to conduct research, and to serve the broader Nebraska community. With the University’s June 2010 entrance to the Big Ten, the UNL community has broadened in scope. Consistent with an internationally-significant Big Ten institution, Plan Big aspires to provide the physical framework for UNL to grow and strengthen its place among national peers in academics, athletics, and research. The Plan Big master plan encourages flexibility and entrepreneurship, and positions the University to anticipate and adapt to change while always building toward a long-term vision of campus and community.

Plan Big capitalizes on UNL’s national reach while remaining true to the University’s place, history and identity in Nebraska. The plan is centered on students, faculty, and staff. It was created through engagement with and input from the UNL campus and City of Lincoln communities. Plan Big amplifies and builds on the identity and character of each campus—City and East. It creates recommendations for a connected, two-campus system where future development is highly integrated with landscape goals, so that together they contribute to a cohesive, high quality sense of place. Central to Plan Big is the notion that the University must aspire and reach beyond today’s confines. Rather than conceiving of singular, circumscribed projects, the plan suggests ways that the University should create collaborative places that are conceived of as contributing to and reinforcing the whole. For example, each building or landscape project is envisioned as part of a broader district strategy that links together building program, exterior landscape ideas, and circulation strategies to create and enhance a sense of place. Similarly, UNL is celebrated for its relationship to the City of Lincoln and its broader context. The plan ensures that the University will be a strong partner to both the private and public sectors, creating connections to the City of Lincoln and burgeoning innovation campus.
The plan for City Campus expands the compact, walkable core and improves connections to surrounding partners.

Plan Big is driven by the University’s recent growth aspirations, Big Ten admittance, and the University’s aim to create a memorable identity and sense of place on its Lincoln campuses.

UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman outlined bold growth and student success initiatives in his 2011 and 2012 State of the University addresses. The University has laid out goals to increase enrollment, tenure-track faculty, research expenditures, and graduation rates to achieve these visions of academic achievement and fiscal sustainability. While growth will be transformative in a positive way for the University, it must be thoughtfully planned and balanced with existing needs. On both City and East campus, the master plan has identified ample room to accommodate future needs for new buildings and expansions, with a development potential of between 2.8 million and 3.6 million gross square feet (with buildings ranging from four to five stories) on City Campus and between 800,000 and one million gross square feet (with buildings ranging from three to four stories) on East Campus.
The fundamental principle for growth on each campus is to concentrate activity in the core. Concentrating development helps to enable interaction and interdisciplinary collaboration, allow efficient infrastructure investments, and protect land for open space activities. The master plan sensitively locates several new building sites, expansions, and renovations within City Campus’ historic academic core through redevelopment and infill. The development sites have been carefully selected and designed to reinforce and strengthen the existing pedestrian structure by framing and right-sizing landscape spaces and aligning buildings to reinforce the landscape structure of campus. The existing pattern of development on East Campus creates isolated building sites that do not encourage interaction. Future development sites on East Campus have been sited to create clusters of buildings with appropriate relationships among them that encourage collaboration. With this strategy, East Campus’ agricultural research lands, which are critical to land-based research and to UNL’s land-grant history, remain protected from encroaching development.
Aerial view of City Campus, today, looking northeast toward East Campus.
Aerial view of East Campus, today, looking west toward C. Y. Thompson Library.
BE THE PREMIER MIDWEST INSTITUTION

UNL’s 2010 entrance to the Big Ten established a new set of academic peers at the national level. Among these peers, UNL has many strengths and unique attributes to build from. Plan Big seeks to embody UNL’s strengths and unique attributes in an identity that is expressed in the physical environment through campus design and landscape.

UNL is the westernmost member of the Big Ten, which impacts the University’s landscape and image. As one moves from the eastern U.S. toward UNL’s central location, there are decreasing precipitation rates, decreasing tree canopy, and increasing predicted droughts. These conditions contribute to a landscape character at UNL that is and respectful of its climate.

Within the Big Ten, UNL also emerges as one of the most urban campuses. UNL’s location immediately north of downtown Lincoln creates tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the vitality of a downtown relationship. Plan Big embraces City Campus’ downtown edge, celebrating the north-south corridors that connect the City to the campus and the transition from city to campus along Q Street.

CREATE A MEMORABLE UNL IDENTITY

A clear sense of campus image and identity will be critical to ensure that growth occurs in a way that reinforces and strengthens UNL’s national reputation and provides a clear sense of campus image and identity. It is often said that potential recruits—whether faculty, staff or student—make a decision about a campus within the first few moments of an initial campus visit. This speaks to the importance of campus identity and ‘sense of place’—an elusive yet critical emotional connection we make to a physical environment—for UNL and its future. A high quality, interconnected built and landscape environment speaks volumes about the aspirations and priorities of an institution.

UNL has grown incrementally over time, from its inception as a public institution in 1869 through several eras of planning, growth, and changing needs. Althoughincremental growth has enabled the campus to grow and form as resources emerged over time, in many ways it has inhibited a more holistic view of the university’s potentials. A central observation of Plan Big, for instance, is the uniqueness of the two-campus system: the historically urban City Campus and its more pastoral counterpart at East Campus. Each campus has a unique character that is shaped by its history, topography and ecology, campus uses, and immediate adjacencies. A key differentiator among its peers and a powerful dimension of the University’s identity, these distinct campus identities are embraced by Plan Big. Developing each campus consistent with its own character will enable greater diversity of experience, a stronger sense of place and a greater appeal to a broader community.

The Plan Big campus master plan and landscape plan is a chance for the University to plan for its future in an integrated way that coordinates the multiple systems that make it work—from learning environments to mobility to campus landscape. Plan Big answers the University’s charge by presenting a holistic, systems-based approach to a new, more sustainable era—taking a step back from the specific concerns of today to create a greater, bigger view of the University’s future potentials. Specifically, Plan Big improves the quality of landscape systems and spaces, increases connectivity on campus and to the surrounding context, and strengthens the potential for innovation and collaboration in the learning environment.
The future illustrative master plan for City Campus.
The future illustrative master plan for East Campus
PLAN BIG

Plan Big represents the first landscape master plan that UNL has undertaken in its history. The coordination of the master plan and landscape master plan is a unique approach that symbolizes the University’s commitment to creating a strong identity for its landscape that is on par with its status in the Big Ten and as a nationally recognized institution. This creates the opportunity for a holistic plan with a vision for all aspects of university activity: academics and research, residential and student life, campus context and culture, athletics and recreation, open space and stormwater management, transportation and parking, and infrastructure. Each of these topics is overlapping and intertwined. They are embodied in physical ideas at all scales, from broad organizing concepts for the whole university, to distinct plans for each campus, to street sections and conceptual district designs for special landscapes and new buildings. Ultimately, each idea—from small to large—is grounded in UNL’s mission and strategic goals.

Plan Big is a plan for both City and East Campus, the connections between them, and between the University and its surroundings. Plan Big builds on the unique character of each campus and offers recommendations to improve and enhance each, while maintaining the elements that are valued by the campus community. With its proximity to Downtown, City Campus is envisioned as an urban campus that capitalizes on connections beyond its edges, has increased density within the core to provide space for new development, and creates a welcoming, vibrant landscape. East Campus’s agricultural lands and open landscape represent UNL’s connections to its land grant history. The plan respects these traditions, while finding ways to create more logical circulation, increase the vibrancy of outdoor spaces, and encourage more interaction across campus.

The physical plan is organized into three themes:

- **Big and Green;**
- **Big, but Well Connected;** and
- **Thinking Big.**

UNL AND PLAN BIG’S GROWTH ASPIRATIONS

- To increase enrollment by 5,000 students to reach 30,000 students by 2017
- To increase UNL’s graduation rate to 70% by 2017
- To increase tenure track faculty by 160 to 1,300 with a corresponding increase in non-tenure track faculty, lecturers, and support staff
- A goal of $300 million in total research expenditures, of which half would be federal awards
- Plan Big accommodates 2.8 million to 3.6 million gross square feet (with buildings ranging from four to five stories) of new space on City Campus
- Plan Big accommodates 800,000 to one million gross square feet (with buildings ranging from three to four stories) of new space on East Campus
Physically, Plan Big includes strategies inspired by the character zones of campus that were observed from analysis of existing conditions and historic patterns. The plan for both campuses expands each campus’ vibrant, walkable academic core by expanding the well-scaled pedestrian realm, extending campus malls and relocating interior roads and parking. Additionally, each plan provides a stronger, more human-scale experience at the campus’ periphery.

The landscape system is a critically important element of UNL’s campus. It forms the framework within which future development will occur and is responsible for creating a UNL identity that inspires pride and sense of place. UNL’s campus landscape includes mobility types such as campus malls, streets, shared service drives and paths. It also includes landscape gathering places and functional areas such as quadrangles, gardens, plazas and parking lots. In order to create a strong framework, UNL must commit to investing in, elevating, and maintaining three critical elements: the University’s civic realm, places for people, and sustainable strategies. The master plan includes several important projects to accomplish this:

1. Invest in the Civic Realm

People and programs make a University great, but that success is not possible without the support of the spaces which form daily experiences and connect the campus community. The civic realm must be thought of as an integrated system—what happens outside the buildings affects the programs within them, and vice versa. UNL must commit to improving and transforming its civic infrastructure, to creating memorable, symbolic open spaces, and to clarifying streets, paths, and mobility systems. Memorial Mall, the 14th Street Mall, and the East Campus Quadrangle are key opportunities.

14th Street Mall

On both campuses, the malls form the main spines of the campus structure, providing views, circulation, and places for small gatherings. The 14th Street Mall on City Campus is a primary circulation corridor, connecting important student uses such as the Union, future CBA, Memorial Mall, campus recreation and student housing. Plan Big redesigns the 14th Street Mall as a multi-modal corridor, with dedicated space for pedestrians, bikes, and the potential for a future shuttle lane moving quickly and efficiently north-south.
“The physical environment of the campus impacts our attractiveness to students as well as influences our own satisfaction as a work place.”

— State of the University, Chancellor Perlman

14th Street will provide clear corridors for pedestrian and bike movement through City Campus, as well as plan for the long-term possibility of accommodating a shuttle lane.
East Campus Commons

Despite the presence of a series of community life hubs on East Campus—the Student Union, the Dairy Store and C.Y. Thompson Library—the center of East Campus today lacks an iconic central, outdoor space. A lovely, but underutilized valley between these uses, called South Meadows, is reimagined as a new, vibrant East Campus Commons. The plan suggests that dining from the Union can spill out onto a series of outdoor terraces, a collaborative-learning plaza can extend the learning environment of a re-imagined “nerve center” at C.Y. Thompson, and an outdoor space on the north side of the Food Industry-Filley Hall can allow for better connections between this campus icon and the existing community. Service roads are minimized and pedestrian connections are privileged.

Memorial Mall

All of UNL’s Big Ten peers share a common landscape type; each has a significant, symbolic green space that is a memorable, iconic part of the campus structure such as the Oval at Ohio State or the Diag at Michigan. While that type of space is lacking at UNL today, the University has the opportunity to make improvements to Memorial Mall, which occupies a symbolically important site adjacent to the stadium. Building on current plans for the East Stadium entrance plaza, the plan enhances the plaza connection from Enright Mall to the Coliseum and the eastern green edge that will engage the 14th Street Mall and the future CBA landscape design. In the long-term, UNL can consider a more complete restoration of Memorial Mall to a campus open space.
On East Campus, the East Campus Commons (south of the Student Union) is re-designed to better connect to the surrounding uses, including the C. Y. Thompson Library and Filley Hall. Outdoor terraces and improved entrances will help activate this underutilized space.
2. Create Places for People

UNL has many open spaces on its campuses, but a goal of Plan Big is to enhance what exists to make them more usable, welcoming places for people. Amidst the hot Nebraska summers and cold, windy winters, these places must be carefully designed to provide shelter and a comfortable microclimate, active edges and program, and a variety of seating and furnishings to allow flexible use. The Love Library Gardens and East Union Quadrangle are examples of future places for people:

Love Library Gardens

Located at the physical heart of City Campus, Love Library is a prime opportunity to re-envision the way learning takes place and re-think the relationship between activity inside of the building and design of the landscapes surrounding it. Today, Cather and Donaldson Gardens are passive open spaces. They provide quiet spaces for study, but are frequently empty and underutilized. The future vision for these two landscapes imagines retaining the spirit of the gardens, but creating better connections to activity within Love Library by renovating the ground level of Love Library to be open and transparent architecture that activates the gardens. Likewise, the gardens themselves will be redesigned to have differentiated plaza spaces with tables and chairs that allow group study or small gatherings. In the long-term, two future building sites at the northern end of the gardens have been identified. Well-designed new buildings on these sites will help to frame the gardens and reduce their scale to make them more intimate, usable spaces for gathering.
In the future, Love Library and its surrounding gardens can be enlivened through a better connection between indoor and outdoor spaces, new programming, and the potential for two new infill development sites.
Plan Big imagines that the East Campus Student Union can become a central beacon on East Campus, foregrounded by a new landscape and activated by a well lit, renovated entrance.
East Union Quadrangle

Connecting students, faculty and staff comfortably and quickly between City and East Campuses is an important goal of the master plan. A new East Union Quadrangle is created north of the East Union to offer a gathering space for students who are arriving to and using the Union. The open space foregrounds the East Union in an open, flexible green space, which is paired with a new transit hub that brings the campus shuttle directly to the East Union’s northern entrance. In the future, the East Union façade can be renovated to create a more open, transparent façade that functions as a light box, and welcomes people to the Union in a very visible, safe setting. Each of these improvements will increase visibility of the Union and enhance the ability for visitors to locate the Union.

The entrance to the East Campus Student Union, today
3. **Work toward a Sustainable Future**

UNL’s campus landscape has many roles to fill. It must provide space for gatherings, studying, and large functions, and it must be designed in a way that is expressive of the UNL identity and climate. At the same time, the landscape plays an important role in stormwater management and environmental sustainability. Given the distinct landscape identities of City and East Campus, Plan Big imagines that each campus has the opportunity to reflect the best practices for stormwater management. City Campus amplifies and reflects best practices for integration of stormwater into an urban setting, while East Campus capitalizes on its lower-density development and finds opportunities for restoration strategies. On both campuses, an over-arching strategy is to reduce runoff from upstream, preventing it from moving downstream and worsening the problems there. Examples of this philosophy can be applied to both the urban and rural campuses of the University:

City Campus Drainage

Remarkably, the hydrology of City Campus still follows the topographic features of the pre-development landscape, with 14th Street as a north-south valley between two ridge lines along 12th and 16th Street, all leading to the low-point of Antelope Valley. Plan Big advocates for specific stormwater strategies within this cross-section, including minimizing run-off along ridgelines by reducing impervious surfaces (at the historic core of campus and along the 16th street residential district), capturing and conveying stormwater along campus valleys (along 14th and X Streets) and increasing porous and flood-resilient landscapes in low-lying areas (near Harper-Shramm-Smith and Textron).

East Campus Drainage

Dead Man’s Run is a prominent natural feature on East Campus, running west to east and dividing the major agricultural research fields from the core of the developed campus. All of East Campus drains north to Dead Man’s Run, with two major drainage ways connecting from development to the south of campus to Dead Man’s Run to the north. Plan Big envisions that the storm channel near the eastern end of the Loop Road and to the west of the College of Law is restored from an underground pipe to a naturalized drainage channel that is integrated with, rather than an invisible part of, the landscape. Restoration of this low ground on campus will allow for successful storage and treatment of stormwater runoff so that it can be slowly released and cleaned on its way to Dead Man’s Run. Further, the new restored landscape can be designed as a beautiful and functional part of the campus landscape that symbolizes the East Campus academic mission and research while physically allowing for connective trails from the core of campus to its research fields.
The storm channel near the eastern end of the East Campus Loop Road will be restored to a naturalized drainage channel.

In low-lying edge areas, Plan Big recommends strategies to increase porous surfaces and introduce more shade for human comfort and to buffer from adjacent infrastructure.
The Plan Big master plan creates a more connected University in two ways:

1. The plan identifies and improves programmatic connections between the University’s edges and its surroundings; and

2. The plan improves mobility options, such as biking, walking, transit, and driving to and within each campus.

Programmatic Connections

UNL is fortunate to be located in a vibrant City and context. City Campus is surrounded by Downtown Lincoln to the south, the Whittier Campus/Textron redevelopment site to the east, the evolving Haymarket/Arena district to the west, and UNL’s future Innovation Campus to the north. Improved connections to each of these areas will strengthen the campus itself. East Campus, similarly, has important connections to strengthen and clarify, including links to the Innovation Campus and sensitive relationships to the residential neighborhoods beyond. Plan Big’s approach to the UNL Zipper Zone—the region on City Campus between R and Q Streets—is a key example of opportunities to strengthen city-campus connections.

The Zipper Zone

Plan Big looked critically at the character of the “Zipper Zone” on City Campus to gain an understanding of the nuanced programmatic relationships that knit City Campus into the downtown edge. Four north-south corridors stand out as significant connections: the 12 Street arts and cultural corridor, 14th Street student life spine, Centennial Mall’s historic and civic corridor, and the potential for 17th Street’s closure to create a strong student living corridor. The plan identifies future development sites within the zipper zone on each of these corridors, which should follow and reinforce these programmatic relationships. Plan Big also examined the role of Q Street as a transition corridor between university and city uses, and recommends ongoing coordination between the city, university, and private property owners as this area develops further.
Forming the southern edge of City Campus, the “Zipper Zone” is a mixed use area with distinct programmatic identities that form along the north-south corridors. Future development in this zone will help reinforce the vibrant area.
Mobility Connections

Plan Big seeks to create a more connected two-campus system with transportation options that minimize conflicts and maximize user choices and experience.

Complete Streets

Today on City Campus, conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and cars are common within the core of campus, particularly along the 14th Street Mall and Vine Street. The plan creates complete streets on Vine Street, R Street, a new X Street, and 16th Street. Complete streets separate and balance safe places for bikes, pedestrians, the campus shuttle, and vehicles. The plan also relocates large parking lots from the walkable core of campus to sites that are easily accessible by vehicle at campus gateways, minimizing the overlap of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The campus’s complete streets work together with the mall system, which provides internal circulation for pedestrians and bikes. North-south campus malls will have dedicated lanes for bikes that connect to the complete streets network.
Connections Between Campuses

While UNL’s two campuses are distinct and serve different programs, it is still important to be a connected, unified campus system. The master plan seeks to better connect the two campuses and provide alternative transportation options that reduce the need to rely on cars to travel between them. The plan clarifies bike paths between campuses, working in concert with City of Lincoln planning efforts to create several potential options for a continuous bike route from City to East Campus. The campus shuttle was also examined carefully in an effort to create the most efficient travel route. Additionally, amenitized transit hubs are created on each campus. An East Campus transit gateway is envisioned north of the Union and a City Campus hub is created as part of the Memorial Mall / CBA district.

On East Campus, a new Union landscape and renovations to the northern entrance help transform the East Campus Union into a welcoming transit hub with front-door access via shuttle.
East Campus Street Grid

On East Campus, the current challenge to mobility is the existing Loop Road, which lacks a pedestrian realm and causes challenges to navigability. Plan Big restores a more regular, rectilinear street grid to East Campus. This is accomplished by connecting Fair Street continuously across campus to 48th Street, and extending new north-south connector streets where needed. Connections between campus and Holdrege Street, East Campus’ important southern edge, are clarified and made more sympathetic to users and neighborhood residents. The cumulative result of these changes is a more clearly navigable campus structure with new, accessible development sites available at key intersections.

The new East Campus street grid better connects Fair Street and is an important part of the landscape system.
The academic core of City Campus.
At the core of all Plan Big recommendations is the impetus to create world-class, collaborative learning environments on both of UNL’s main campuses. The plan identifies future development sites across both campuses and proximate to all programs in order to accommodate entrepreneurial growth in academic programs and research that occurs over the next decade and reinforces the University’s growth aspirations. A focus on collaborative spaces and East Campus program clusters will help foster innovation and 21st century learning styles.

Collaborative Spaces

The master plan seeks to celebrate innovation and excellence across campus learning environments by making learning more visible and engaged with the campus and landscape design. This includes a new image for Love Library, with an open, transparent ground level that engages the courtyards outside and recommendations for places to create collaborative links among several buildings, such as a possible future Manter Hall expansion, that connects with Hamilton Hall to encourage interaction among disciplines. Other opportunities identified for collaborative spaces on City Campus include the future College of Business Administration (CBA), an enclosed gathering area that connects Bessey, Oldfather and Burnett Halls, and the creative design of a new dining hall near 17th Street.

Program Clusters

On East Campus, new development and building expansions are sited carefully to create programmatic clusters. In today’s universities, innovation increasingly happens at the intersection of multiple programs. These small groups of buildings have shared landscapes or indoor gathering spaces that are meant to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and social interaction between members of different areas of expertise. Other opportunities identified for program clusters on East Campus include Nursing, Veterinary Diagnostics, Activities Center and Hardin Hall.

“While there are places where higher education has lost the confidence of its constituents, I believe Nebraskans in large part continue to recognize the importance of the university in building a 21st Century economy, both through the cultivation of talented young people and the innovation of our faculty.”
—State of the University, Chancellor Perlman

Future programmatic clusters on East Campus
Implementation will occur over time and should capitalize on near-term catalyst projects; a single project can transform a broader district. Already, construction progress can be seen on the stadium project and in the near future, a new CBA building will terminate the eastern view from Memorial Stadium.
IMPLEMENTING PLAN BIG

Implementation of the Plan Big master plan has the opportunity to be truly transformative for UNL. The master plan equips the University to grow smartly and holistically as opportunities occur. As individual projects and needs arise, they should be capitalize on as catalysts for broader implementation of the plan’s goals. Each project should be understood in relation to the overall master plan goals and contribution to the campus as a whole. The master plan includes landscape and architectural design guidelines to ensure that future projects, renovations, and daily maintenance all work together to support the plan. It also includes recommendations about governance of the plan to ensure coordinated planning and design moving forward.

While program growth will be entrepreneurial and advance over time, several key projects have arisen as priorities. As each project unfolds, it can catalyze additional efforts. Examples of key near-term catalysts and their results may include:

The Memorial Mall / College of Business Administration (CBA) District

Today, several reasons have aligned to make it clear that there is significant opportunity to re-think the Memorial Mall / CBA district, and the campus’ gateway at Vine Street. Construction for the stadium expansion has changed use of the existing Memorial Mall parking spaces. With the current East Stadium landscape project, the University has already seized the opportunity to transform the removed parking spaces near the stadium entrance back into a plaza and open space, creating a welcoming entrance and gathering space for Game Day, and every day use. Similarly, the College of Business Administration is currently designing a new building at the eastern corner of 14th and Vine Streets. Landscape associated with CBA should respond to the Memorial Mall plan and help to further advance its goals, as well as the relationship to the Kauffman Building, and Vine Street. These two projects serve to “bookend” Memorial Mall. Together they can make significant progress toward creating a renewed, Memorial Mall district with improved plaza connections to Enright Garden and to surrounding buildings.

The East Campus Activities Center and District

A renovation is currently underway at the East Campus Activities Center (ECAC). The building is located at a critical site on East Campus, along the east-west Center Street mall. In coordination with the building renovations, this project represents an opportunity to catalyze the redevelopment of the west side of campus, set a precedent for the relationship of buildings and landscape to campus malls, establish a long-term parking supply strategy, and better link Hardin Hall into the core of campus.

The university is poised at a moment of change, with impending growth, new Big Ten opportunities and the future Innovation Campus on the horizon. UNL’s physical campuses must rise to the challenge of these opportunities and find ways to implement the master plan and landscape master plan as growth occurs and opportunities arise.