“The mission of Brown University is to serve the community, the nation, and the world by discovering, communicating, and preserving knowledge and understanding in a spirit of free inquiry, and by educating and preparing students to discharge the offices of life with usefulness and reputation. We do this through a partnership of students and teachers in a unified community known as a university-college.”
Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown

Approved by the Corporation in 2013, Brown University is guided by our 10-year strategic plan, "Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown," which offers the broad vision and goals to ensure the University's capacity to fulfill its mission of teaching, research and service at the highest levels. The plan builds on the core values of intellectual independence, creativity, collaborations, and social purpose to achieve greater levels of academic distinction – uniting innovative education and outstanding research to benefit the community, the nation, and the world. A full version can be found at: http://www.brown.edu/web/documents/BuildingOnDistinctionOct262013.pdf

The Handbook for Physical Planning

A new framework plan that corresponds with the vision outlined in the strategic plan was also created in 2013. The plan builds on the Strategic Framework for Physical Planning at Brown developed in 2003, but with a new focus on the campus as a physical analog to Brown's open curriculum. Based on this idea, six planning principles were developed to help direct the campus development:

1. Prioritize academic uses on College Hill
2. Celebrate the Brown scale
3. Energize the core with a mixture of uses
4. Engage Thayer Street
5. Connect the Campus
6. Consolidate landholdings and catalyze partnerships

A complete version of the Handbook for Physical Planning and other area plans can be found at:

http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/Building_Brown/resources/

The Operational Plan

In September 2015 the University completed an operational plan to translate the broad, aspirational goals set out in Building on Distinction into concrete actions to be taken over the next 10 years. The "Operational Plan for Brown's Excellence" outlines targeted actions to position Brown to enhance its role as a leader in higher education and research. The plan also will drive the University's comprehensive campaign, launched in October 2015 and guide our Institutional Master Plan in the future.

A complete version of the Operational Plan for Brown's Excellence can be found at:


Contributions to the Community

In 2003, Brown University along with the other institutions of higher education, reached an agreement with the City of Providence to make voluntary contributions to the City over 20 years and to make transition payments over 15 years on any properties that are acquired and converted to academic use. In 2012, Brown forged an additional agreement with the City that dramatically increased its financial support, providing the City $31.5 million over eleven years. Today total annual tax payments and voluntary contributions are over $8.2 million per year.

This amendment includes an update on the successful Brown-to-Brown (B2B) Homeownership Program. Since 2008, Brown has renovated and sold 12 properties under the B2B program, which generate $123,000 in property taxes for the City annually and generated years of work for tradespeople.

Brown is also an engine for economic development and innovation in the City. Brown is the seventh largest employer in Rhode Island with over 4,500 employees. Brown generates over 8,000 jobs per year through direct payroll, purchasing, construction, and student and visitor spending. Brown attracts and spends $164 million per year on scientific research and development, making the University the leading scientific center in Rhode Island. It is expected that this will grow with continued development of the Jewelry District and the I-195 Redevelopment District in the future.

For more information please see:
http://www.brown.edu/about/providence/home

Thayer Street Planning Study

In January 2014 the City completed the Thayer Street Planning Study (funded by Brown) which developed an urban design concept for the Thayer Street area based on a comprehensive analysis of the area’s character, the market conditions and potential, and the existing regulatory framework. The planning process incorporated input from merchants, property owners, area residents, and neighboring institutions. The near-term goals were focused on regulatory revisions including the development of design guidelines as well as physical improvements for streetscape enhancement, parking, and branding and marketing. These
changes will set the stage for realizing the long-term intent of creating a more diverse, vibrant, and safe district of commercial, residential, and institutional uses.

Brown has already completed several streetscape improvements on Thayer and is continuing to work as part of the Thayer Street District Management Association (TSDMA) on strengthening the character, vibrancy, and safety of the area. This amendment to the 2011 Institutional Master Plan includes projects, partnerships, and acquisitions in alignment with the University’s strategic direction and with the 2014 Thayer Street Study’s goals.

It is intended to supplement previously approved plans and enable us to move forward with these initiatives.

Community Input

At Brown, it is a strongly-held belief that an open and collaborative process helps ensure the best outcome. The development of this amendment is no exception. Brown has worked closely with local stakeholders and is committed to continuing community input throughout the implementation of the plan. For this amendment, Brown delivered over 200 letters by U.S. Mail and over 600 by email to local residents, posted the draft on-line, and held the following meetings.

12/02/15 Open Community Forum
12/04/15 Planning Department
12/07/15 College Hill Neighborhood Association
01/19/16 City Plan Commission

Property Holdings

Brown University is an institution with 6,200 undergraduates, 2,600 graduate and medical students, and over 4,500 employees. It currently owns 228 buildings primarily in College Hill and the Jewelry District. Recent changes in property holdings reflect the planning principles in the Handbook for Physical Planning, including both the sale of underutilized properties primarily as part of the Brown-to-Brown Home Ownership Program and acquisition in key locations:

Acquisitions

- The following seven residential properties were acquired by Farview Inc. (Brown’s wholly owned real estate subsidiary) in a single transaction:
  434 Brook Street
  436 Brook Street
  442 Brook Street
  444 Brook Street
  450 Brook Street
  167 Cushing Street
  169 Cushing Street

- 272 Thayer Street, acquired by Farview – a multi-tenant commercial building, continuing to operate as such.

- 37 Charlesfield Street, acquired by Brown – a single-family residence that has long been a rental unit, leased to students. The building is being renovated as a Brown-to-Brown house (see below).

- 26 Ship Street, acquired by Brown – a two-story office building adjacent to the Alpert Medical School, which will be used for the School’s office needs.

Brown-to-Brown

The Brown-to-Brown Home Ownership Program is a program designed to sell Brown-owned residential properties to eligible members of the faculty and staff. This program is a demonstration of Brown’s commitment to the City of Providence and its College Hill neighbors by enabling Brown faculty and staff to live in the community. Furthermore, once sold, these properties will become taxable as privately-owned residential properties, adding to the tax base of the City of Providence. To date, the program has renovated and sold a total of 12 properties, including the three below since May 2014:

- 95 Benevolent Street
- 97 Benevolent Street
- 99 Benevolent Street

In addition, three properties are in the process of conversion and will be offered for sale in the near future.
Brook Street Interim Parking

In July 2014 Brown acquired seven contiguous properties, each of which was “improved” with a dilapidated two-unit residential structure. The properties’ previous owner held a longstanding vision of demolition of the structures with redevelopment of the site as a hotel. When those plans were not realized, Brown acquired the property with the intent of redeveloping the site for academic or residential use.

Given the poor condition of the existing structures, Brown is seeking to demolish them now in order to remove the unsightly structures and initially create a landscaped parking lot to serve the needs of the Thayer Street commercial district. The project is in keeping with one of the goals outlined in the Thayer Street Study -- to “establish intelligent and sustainable parking solutions.”

The proposed parking lot will be well-lit and its edges will be carefully landscaped to screen the vehicles from the street. It will be managed by a third-party as a commercial lot, not as a permit parking lot for Brown faculty, staff or students.

In the long-term, the University is interested in developing the site to meet emerging residential or academic needs.

The structures to be demolished are:
- 434 Brook Street
- 436 Brook Street
- 442 Brook Street
- 444 Brook Street
- 450 Brook Street
- 167 Cushing Street
- 169 Cushing Street

Aerial of existing site

Concept for new parking lot (final design may vary from this sketch)
Parking & Traffic Impact

A parking/traffic analysis of the immediate area, conducted by the engineering firm VHB, found that the proposed lot would not generate new vehicle trips and that the existing network can accommodate the project traffic. Their analysis projects no changes in level of service compared with existing conditions and, in addition to the parking spaces gained in the new lot, at least two on-street parking spaces will be gained through the closing of existing curb cuts along Brook St. Their report is included as an appendix to this document.

Baseball/Softball Fields Renovation

The University is seeking to complete a major renovation of its existing baseball and softball fields. The project will include regrading both fields to bring them up to competitive standards by addressing the significant existing grade change from home plate to the outfield in baseball and at softball. Both fields are intended to have synthetic turf and upgraded amenities such as new press boxes, grandstands (up to 400 seats at Baseball and 300 at Softball), sunken dugouts, bullpens, scoreboard and safety netting/fencing. The fields currently have sound systems which will be replaced in-kind.

The renovation will also include a new entry at the northwest corner, with associated walkways, landscaping, and signage. No field lighting is included in the project.