

Ohio University Master Plan

Athens, Ohio



In 2014, Ohio University, known for its leadership in sustainability, experienced a surge of growth. To address this growth and maintain highest quality academic and campus experience, while also ensuring that future growth would happen sustainably, Ohio University initiated an update to its Comprehensive Master Plan.

As the ecological and landscape sustainability lead on a master planning team led by Ayers Saint Gross, Biohabitats provided guidance on ways to maximize opportunities presented by new construction and renovations to integrate ecological function and green infrastructure practices throughout the campus landscape.

Integrating ecology and water into a comprehensive campus master plan enhances sustainability and ecological awareness for the Ohio University campus community.

After performing data assessment and site reconnaissance, Biohabitats met with staff from campus grounds, facilities, and sustainability offices, as well as faculty and students, to share observations about the campus' conditions, including its vast ecological resources, and its potential to support improved ecological function, clean water, and resilience. All opportunities presented were also responsive to limitations on staffing and fiscal pragmatism.

Much of Ohio University's main campus lies within the floodplain of the Hocking River, which was channelized after historic flooding in the mid-1960s. A remnant of the original river bed, an oxbow stream, now runs through the center of campus. Biohabitats pointed out that these two waterways provide much of the ecological and hydrological

bones of the campus, and significant potential for enhancement as green infrastructure is considered with new building projects. Biohabitats also identified opportunities to increase tree canopy coverage for which the University's Athens campus is known, with a more diverse, native plan palette that ties into the regional ecology.

The final master plan celebrates the relationship between the campus and the Hocking River corridor, and as the campus grows, so will a greater awareness of ecology that informs its integrated landscape designs that serves multiple functions.

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