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The RACC logo is a red oval containing the letters "RACC" in a white, serif font. The "R" and "A" are connected, and the "C"s are also connected.

RACC

Master  
Plan

February 2020

Community Copy



# Stakeholder/Project Team

'Collaborative' and 'transparent' are two words frequently used when describing how RACC led their master planning process. A diverse and engaged team of RACC's stakeholders was invited to share their pride in what they love about RACC and their aspirations for how RACC could achieve even greater success. This knowledge informed how the facilities and campus could evolve to be a catalyst for RACC's ever growing success.

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Barry Wilson - Director of Advising and Academic Services

## Master Plan Committee (cont.)

Eleisha Moreno - Faculty - Foundational Studies  
Nancy Jackson Faculty - Social Sciences/Human Services  
Angelica Rojo-Monserrate - Senior Secretary - Literacy Program  
David Hessen - Director of Marketing and Communications  
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Berks Alliance  
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Stevens & Lee  
Riverview Bank  
United Way of Berks County  
The Wyomissing Foundation  
Upward Bound  
Warfel Construction  
Weidenhammer Systems  
Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

## Planning Team

Spiezele Architectural Group—Planning and Architecture  
Exit Design—Wayfinding  
Barry Isett & Associates—Civil Entech Engineering—MEP  
FEA—Security  
CBRE/Heery—Cost Estimating  
PJ Dick—Cost Estimating

## MASTER PLAN

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### CONCLUSION



Reading Area Community College (RACC)'s "Welcome" sign which can be seen across campus, announcing that absolutely everyone is welcome here, to be nurtured, educated and motivated to do great things. Our diversity is our strength.

## INTRODUCTION

# Project Overview

Since 1971, Reading Area Community College (RACC) has helped thousands of Berks County residents to achieve success while strengthening broader communities. Students, some of whom may have never dreamed that higher education was in their future, find RACC to be a safe, nurturing place that provides them the support they need to succeed in college, prepare them for their careers, and position them to be contributing members of their communities.

The goal of this master planning process was to develop a path for the future of the campus and facilities rooted in what makes RACC strong while supporting the remarkable path that RACC is taking into the future. This highly collaborative, inclusive, and transparent process led to the generation of great ideas that created an atmosphere of widespread excitement. Greater success at RACC means success for all the various stakeholders involved, both internal and external to RACC. This atmosphere is what sets the stage for community buy-in and increases the likelihood for implementation of the plan.

The resulting Master Plan recommendations reinforce the existing strengths of the campus, maximize utilization of existing facilities, and suggest where alterations and additions could help RACC to continue its upward trajectory in communicating to their students and the overall community that a community college is not only just a viable higher education option, but in RACC's case is the preferred option for students when deciding on their higher education institution.



# Project Mission Statement

Reading Area Community College's Master Plan will be a catalyst to support the Strategic Plan's emphasis on Access, Opportunity, Excellence and Hope as well as promote aspirational growth. It will be a framework for ongoing decision-making related to advancing and assessing RACC's ability to better serve their students who will strengthen Berks County and the City of Reading.

Collectively, the Stakeholders created this Project Mission Statement and the Core Elements to guide all decisions for the Master Plan and subsequent projects to assure that the plan supports RACC's Mission and Strategic Goals.

# Core Elements



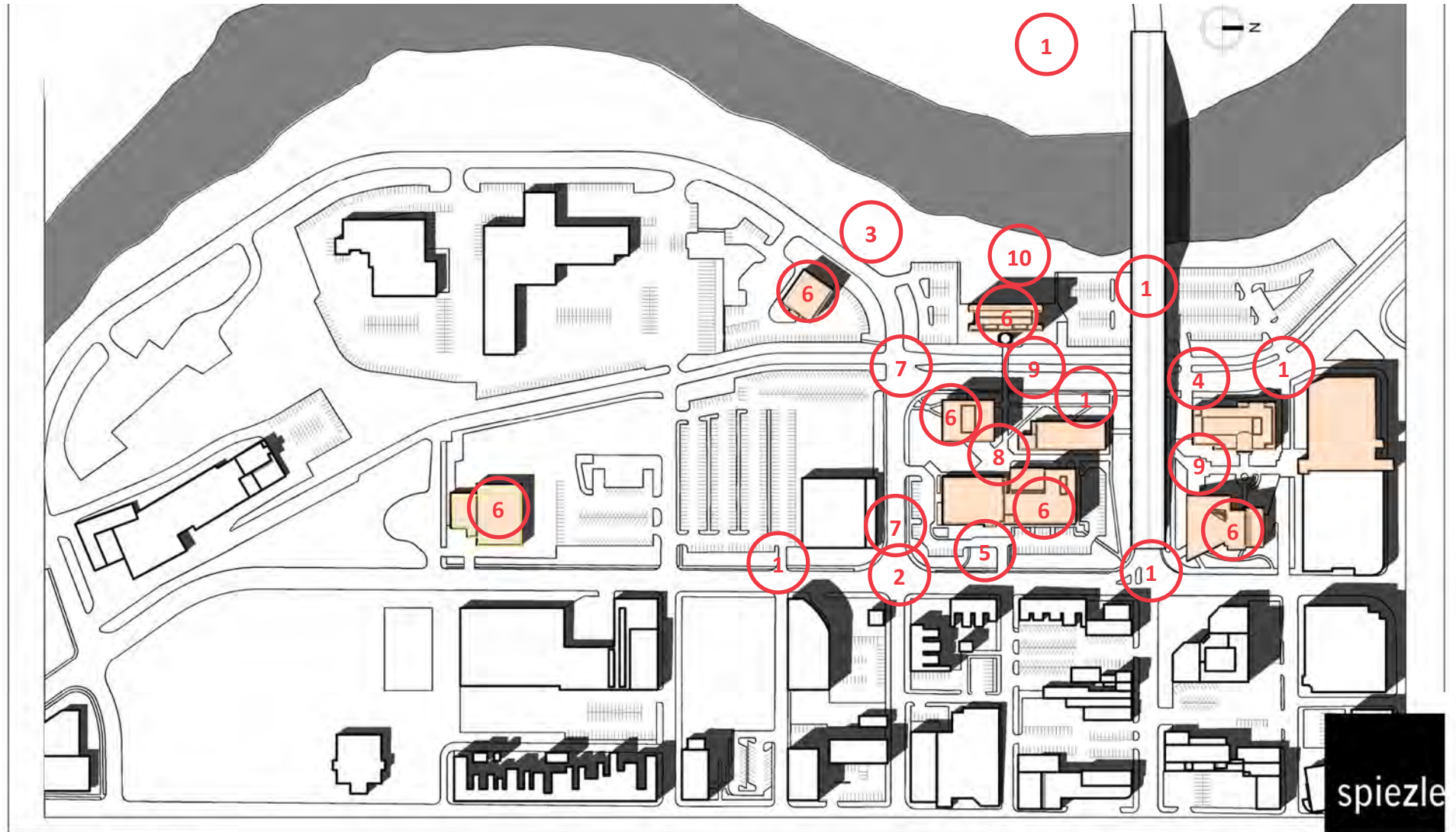


## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Site Observations

Campus Wide:

- 1 Improve Wayfinding while approaching and within the campus
- 2 Create a wonderful main campus entry
- 3 Integrate well with Schuylkill River Trail
- 4 Use the bridge as a gateway to campus and a connecting element within campus with activities
- 5 Promote "Welcome" as the campus theme
- 6 Improve utilization of all buildings with emphasis on student services and programs
- 7 Improve campus intersections for pedestrians and vehicles
- 8 Energize and improve the Quad
- 9 Reinforce and extend the existing campus axes
- 10 Reinforce access to waterfront

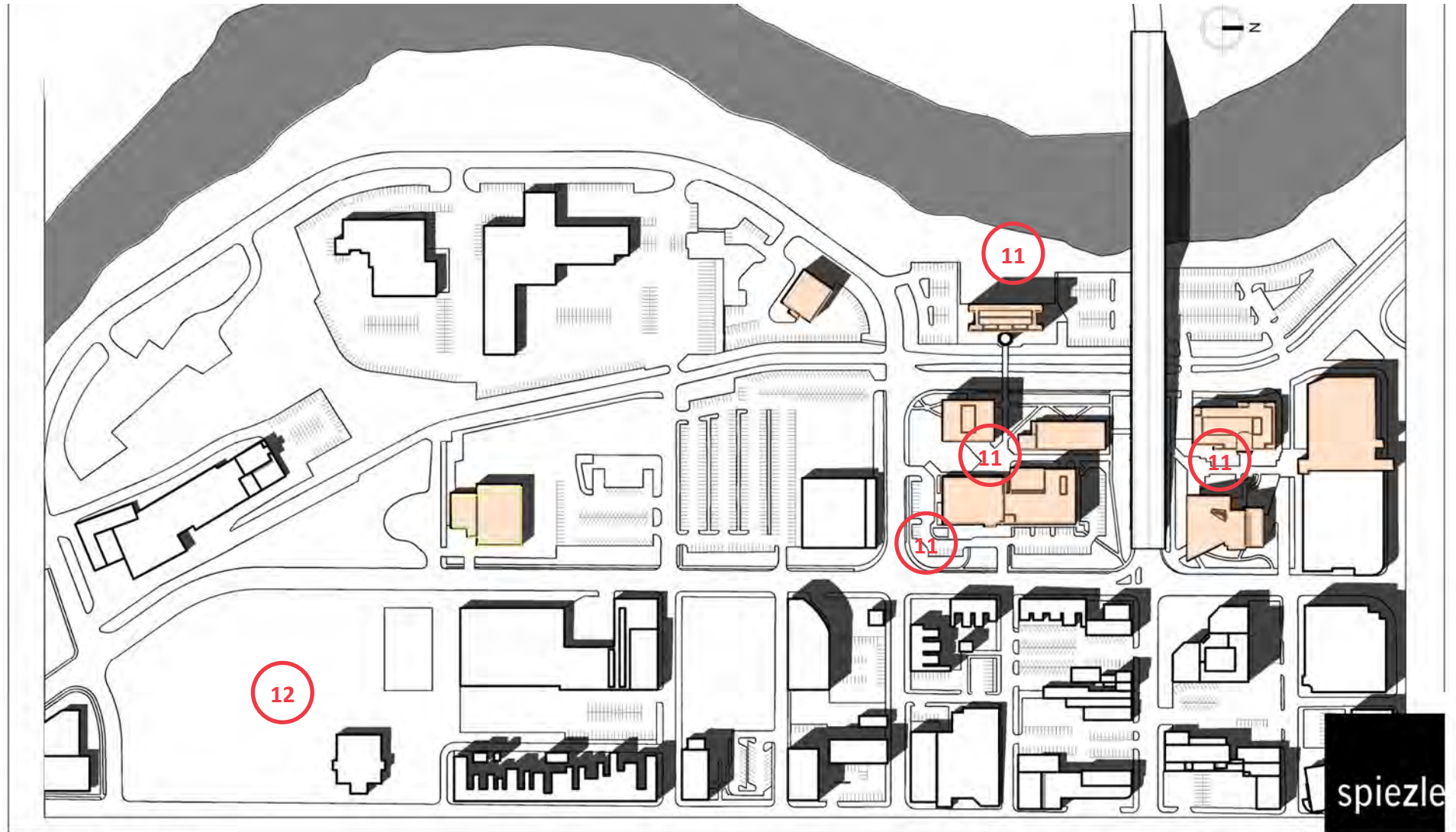


## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Site Observations

Outdoor Recreation:

- 11 Expand on existing green space for passive recreation on campus
- 12 Consider obtaining approval from Reading Recreation Commission to use the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Spruce Recreation Center and/or fields for RACC students





RECOMMENDATIONS

# Master Plan Illustrative Plan



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Overall Campus Views



View to northwest towards the intersection of Second and Franklin Streets.



View showing improvements at the intersection of Second and Franklin Streets to improve the first impression of campus while improving pedestrian crossings.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Overall Campus Views



View to south across Penn Street Bridge towards Berks Hall.



View showing improvements to upgrade the key southwest corner of the intersection as visitors cross the Penn Street Bridge onto 2nd Street which. This will announce the entry to RACC's campus. Landscape/hardscape and building improvements are also evident across the campus.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Overall Campus Views



View towards the northeast with Weitz Hall and Yocum Library in the foreground.



Improvements to engage the river and create safer pedestrian crossings while reinforcing campus axes and improving various campus buildings.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Overall Campus Views



View looking southeast above Penn Street Bridge with Yocum library in the foreground.



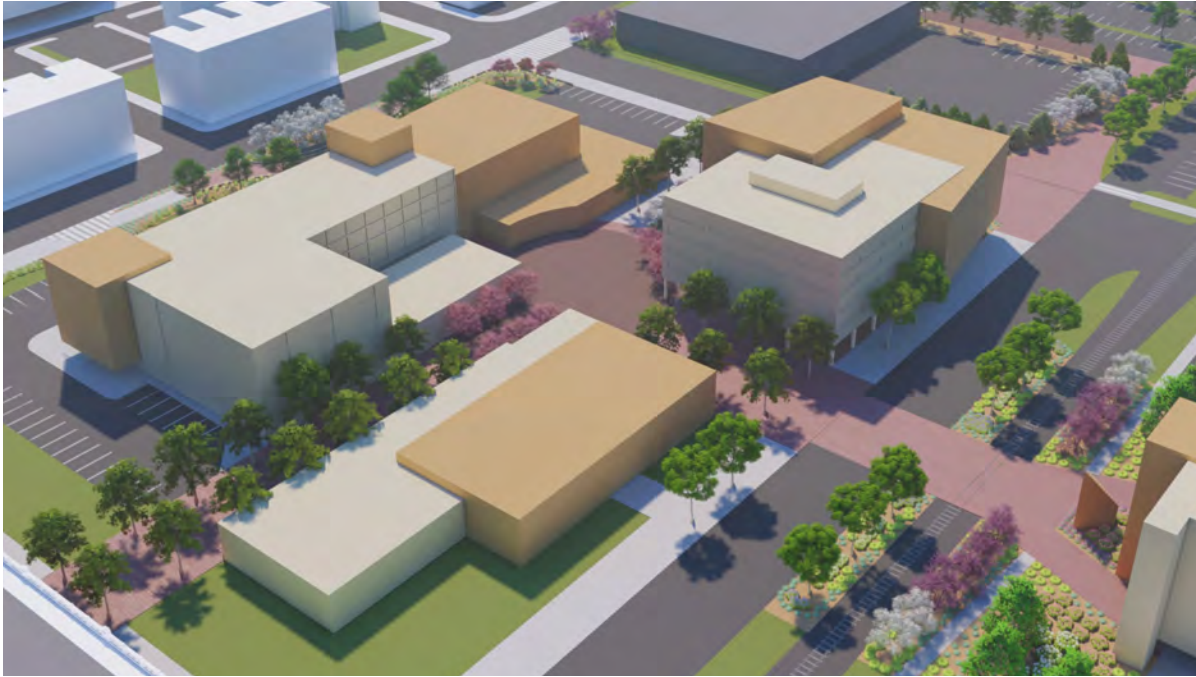
View showing various improvements to better link the core of campus with Yocum Library and beyond to the river.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Site Elements

The Core at the Center of Campus—The Heart of the Campus



Stockton University

Emphasis on the Campus Core.

Reinforcing the Main East/West and North/South axes to connect the Campus



The existing campus circulation axes are enlivened and reinforced to link the campus even more effectively and beautifully.



Brookdale Community College



RECOMMENDATIONS

# Site Elements

North quad at Schmidt/Miller



Reinforce the main east/west axis from Berks down to Yocum Library



Brookdale Community College



Neumann University



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Site Elements

Strong connection under bridge to seamlessly connect both sides of campus

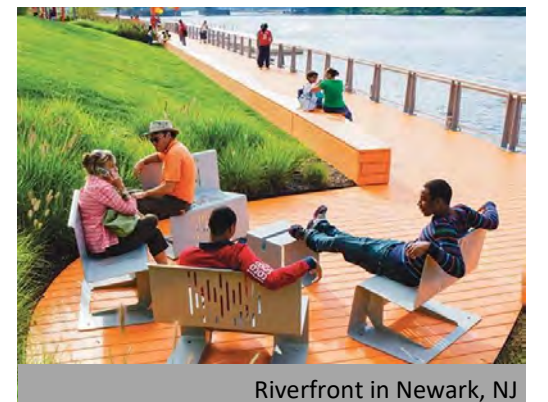


The bridge has been rebuilt to re-emphasize its original beauty. This plan will energize the space below the bridge to make it a desirable place to walk through and hang out.

"The Green" at the River



RACC is situated along a beautiful stretch of the Schuylkill River. "The Green" can be enlivened with activity to build community and to find respite from a hard day of study and work.



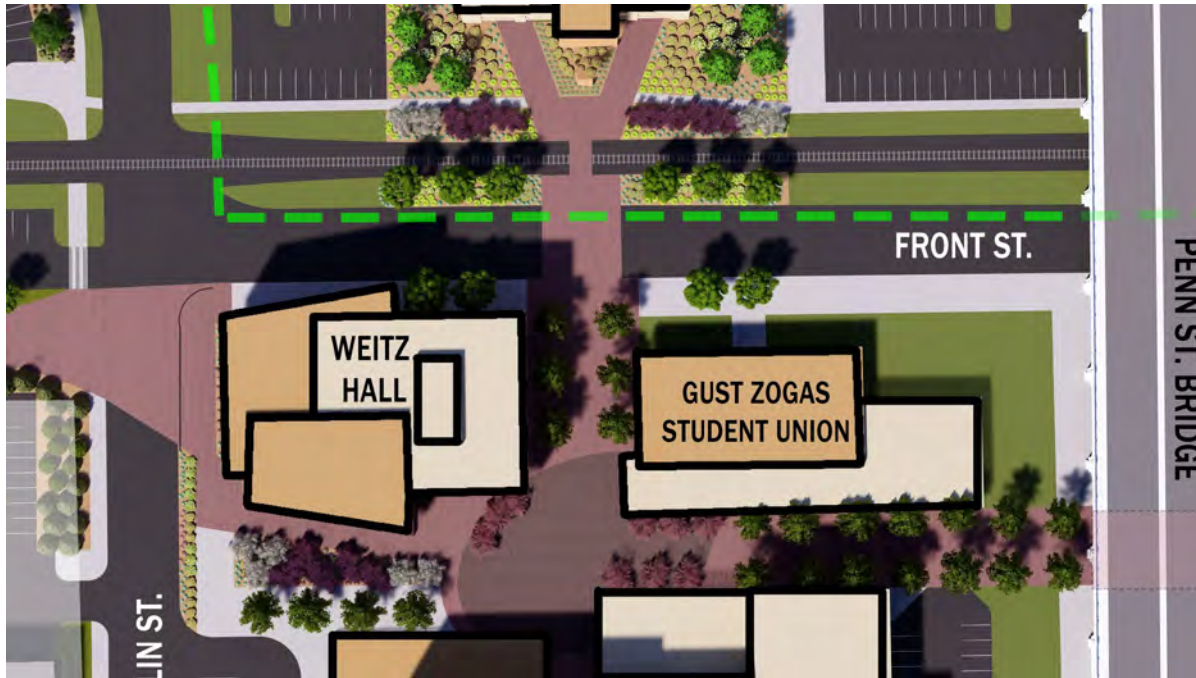
Riverfront in Newark, NJ



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Site Elements

The two pedestrian crossings at Front Street and Franklin Street



By National Association of City Transportation Officials

Pedestrian pathways crossing streets will take priority to strongly link the entire campus and increase safety.

The Relocated Schuylkill River Trail



The anticipated relocation of the Schuylkill River Trail along Front Street will increase vibrant activity through campus and expose new people to RACC who may be just passing through on the Trail but will be engaged and impressed by what they see.



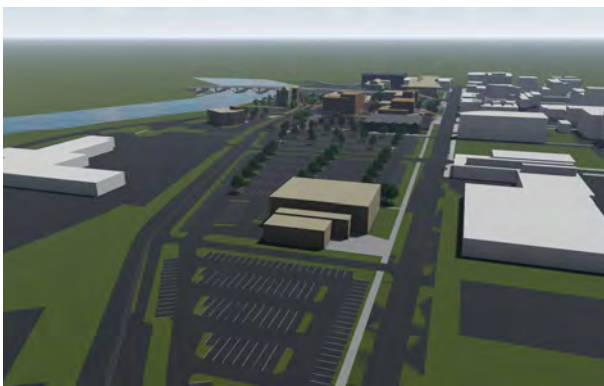
By Traffic Planning & Design, Inc.—2014



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Site Elements

Additional parking on the south side of campus



Successful expansion of RACC and an increased enrollment may require additional parking. Greater utilization of the existing property at south end of campus will allow for considerably more parking than currently exists.

Stately entry to campus at the intersection of Second Street and Franklin



The “front door” to campus will help raise expectations that friends and visitors are entering an important place.



Widener University



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Buildings

### Berks Hall:

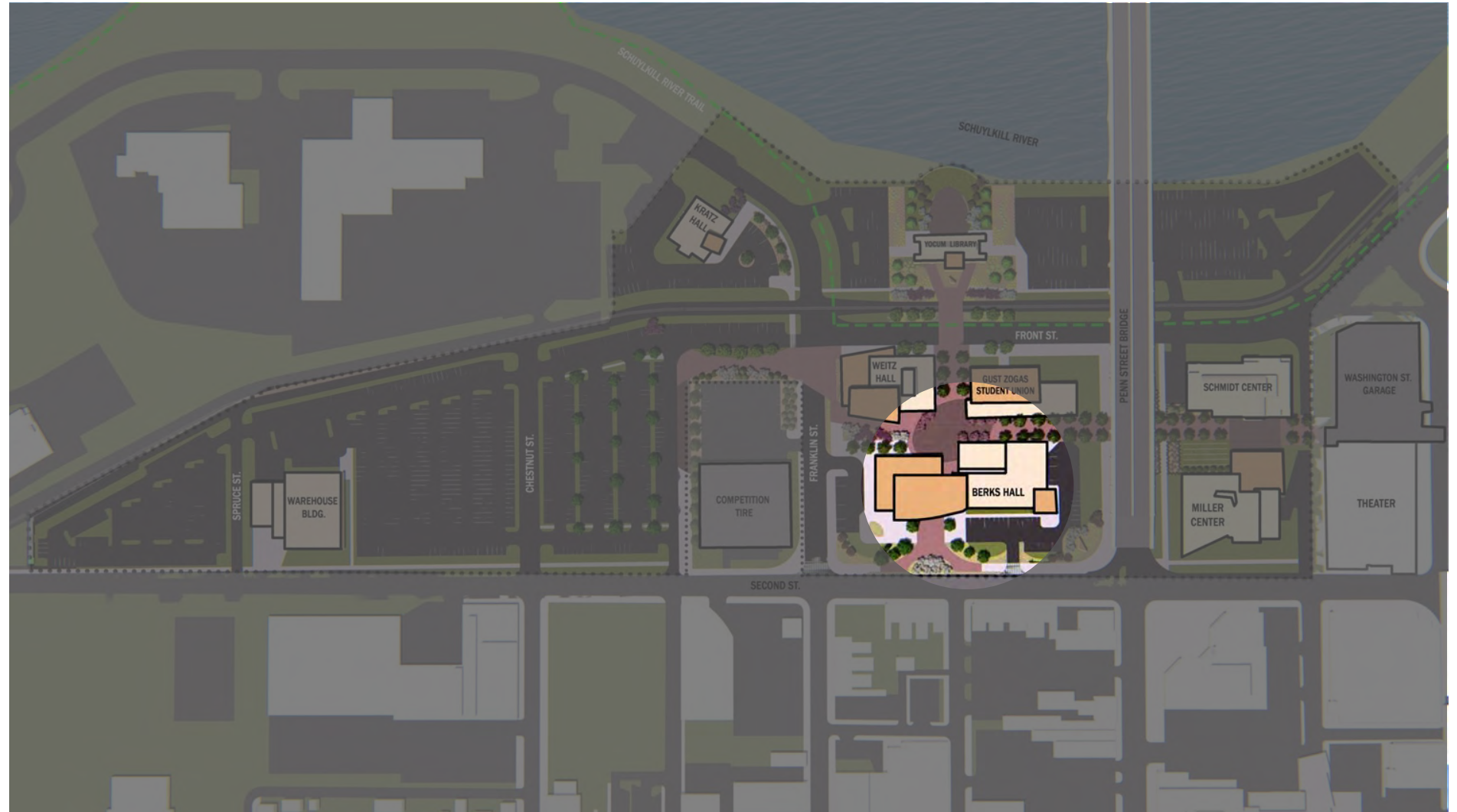
- ◆ Renovate/Expand building to create:
  - ◆ more collaborative classroom opportunities
  - ◆ larger instruction/multi-use spaces
  - ◆ improved vertical circulation
  - ◆ better accommodations for student support space
  - ◆ more collegiate appearance of building
- ◆ Modify and/or move the bookstore to gain space in a key location
- ◆ Open up Cafeteria towards Quad
- ◆ Make building a more attractive contributor to the campus

### Create a Student Success Center for:

- ◆ Academic Support (Advising, Testing, Tutoring, etc.)
- ◆ Career/Professional Development, Resource Center
- ◆ Learning Commons
- ◆ Counseling, etc.

### Create a One-Stop Shop for:

- ◆ Admissions
- ◆ Financial Aid
- ◆ Registrar
- ◆ Cashier

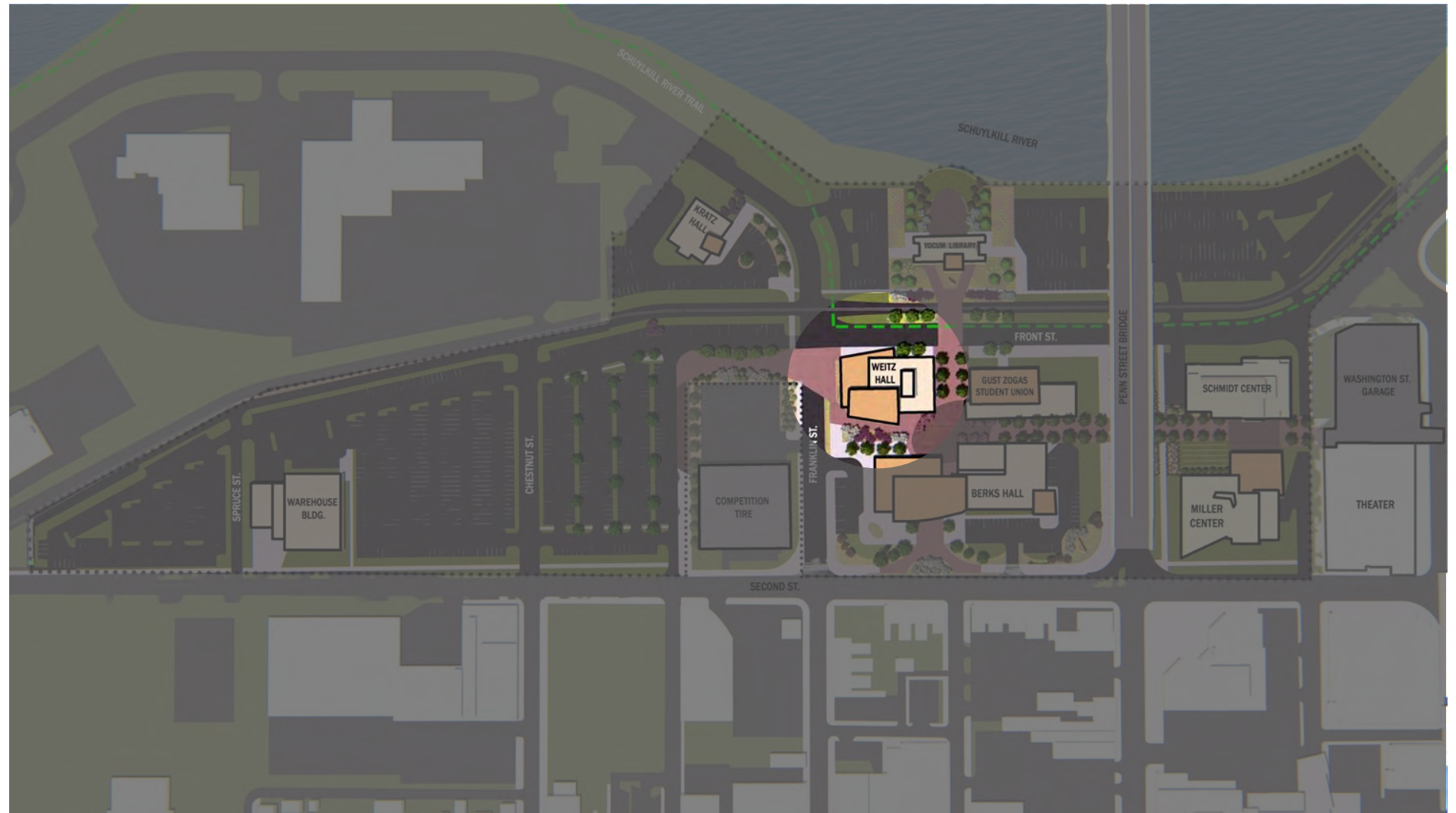


## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Buildings

### Weitz Hall:

- ◆ Renovate/Expand to:
  - ◆ Accommodate growth of and addition to Healthcare majors
  - ◆ Allow for more collaborative pedagogy
  - ◆ Separate labs from within classrooms
  - ◆ Make building a more attractive contributor to the campus
  - ◆ Create more informal learning and lounge spaces
- ◆ Consider relocating Business majors out of building to accommodate growth of Healthcare majors



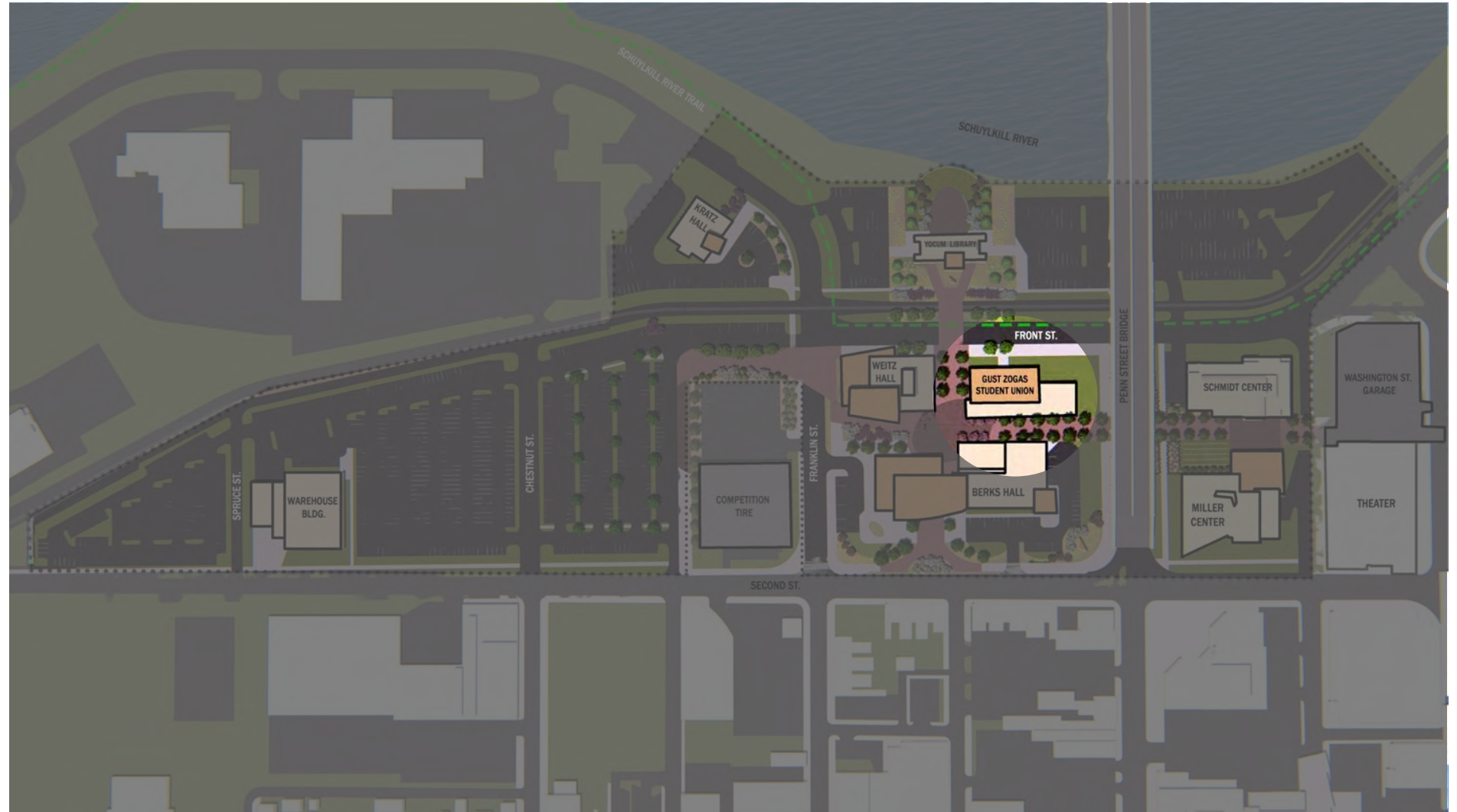


## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Buildings

### Gust Zogas Student Union Building

- ◆ Expand fitness center, lounge spaces, student organization spaces and multipurpose spaces to allow more students to feel more comfortable in accessing important resources
- ◆ Increase clothing and food resources
- ◆ Open up views into building's activities



## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Buildings

### Kratz Hall:

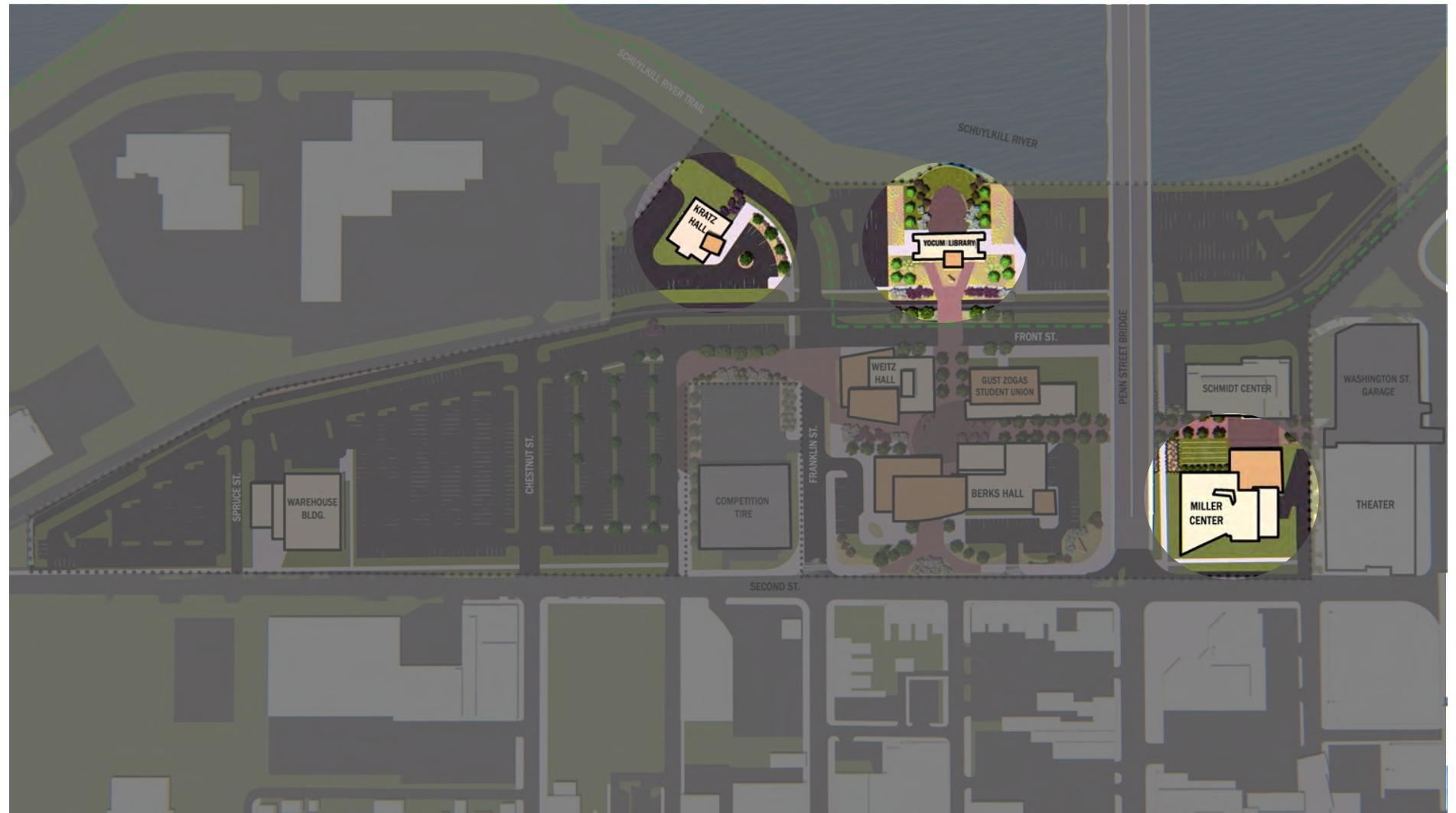
- ◆ Use the building for back-of-house office space
- ◆ If not, reconfigure some spaces to make more effective classrooms and collaboration spaces
- ◆ Create new entry and pedestrian access that faces the campus

### Yocum Library:

- ◆ Building needs to play a more vital role in accommodating the needs of support services, computer needs, collaboration spaces, maker spaces, a forum for collaboration, etc.
- ◆ Expand to improve collaboration space and to make building a more attractive contributor to the overall campus experience including the appreciation of the river

### Miller Center

- ◆ Add classrooms, collaboration spaces, art studios, black box theater and/or lounges to support education programs and increase overall utilization
- ◆ Add entry off Quad
- ◆ Consider adding catering kitchen to support events



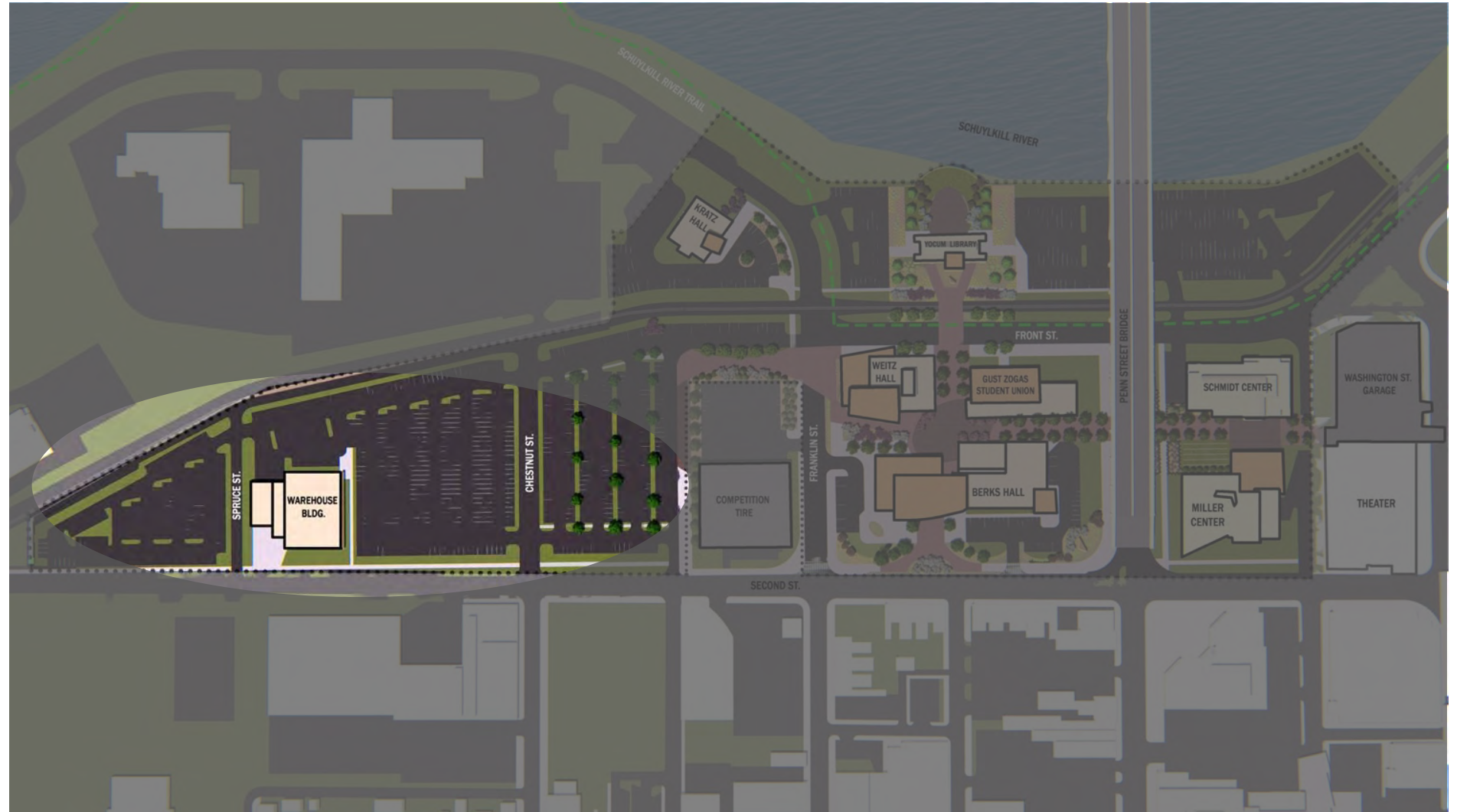


## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Buildings

### Warehouse:

- ◆ Consider renovating to accommodate future construction trade majors
- ◆ Mitigate flood risks with the renovation
- ◆ Additional parking at grade



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Wayfinding

### Introduction to Strategies

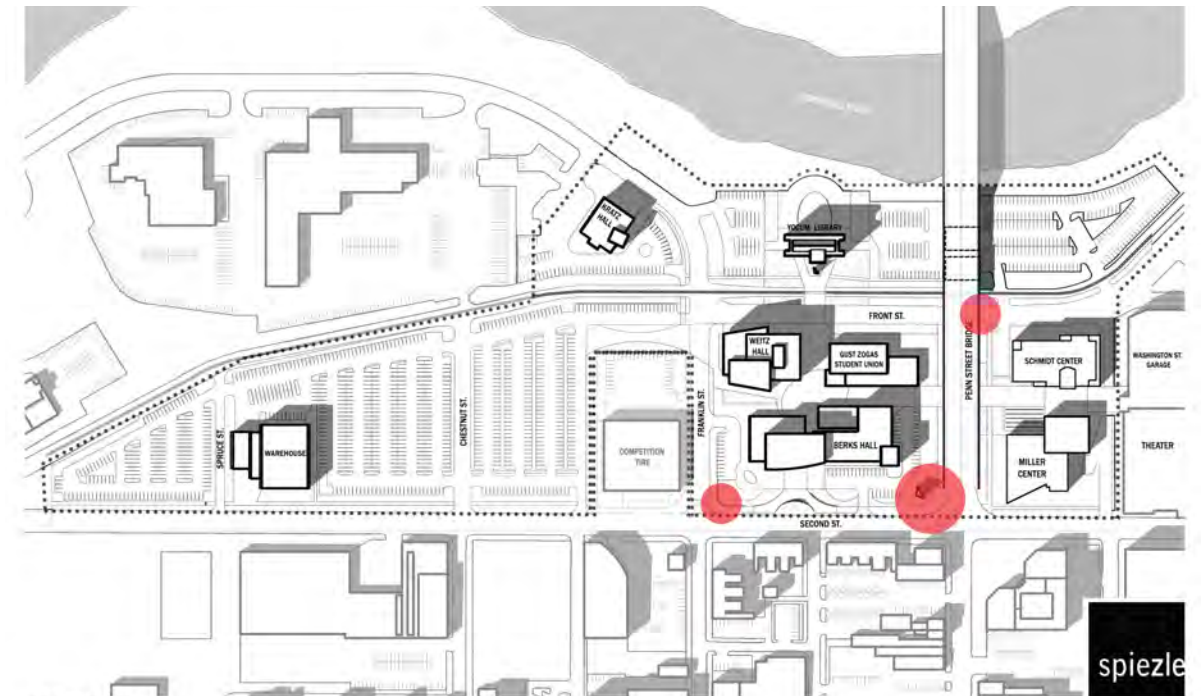
The Wayfinding Master Plan (WMP) identifies opportunities to create the optimal user/visitor experience while navigating the campus. The WMP includes recommendations for the planning and design of the signage as well as an overall wayfinding methodology.

### Strategies Overview

- 1 Gateways to Campus
- 2 Identify Parking
- 3 Vehicular Experience
- 4 Pedestrian Experience
- 5 Define the Campus Edge
- 6 Connect to the Schuylkill River Trail
- 7 Brand Messaging & Storytelling
- 8 Campus Connectivity
- 9 Building Identification

### 1. Gateways to Campus

Create a sense of arrival at the entrances to campus.



MASTER PLAN



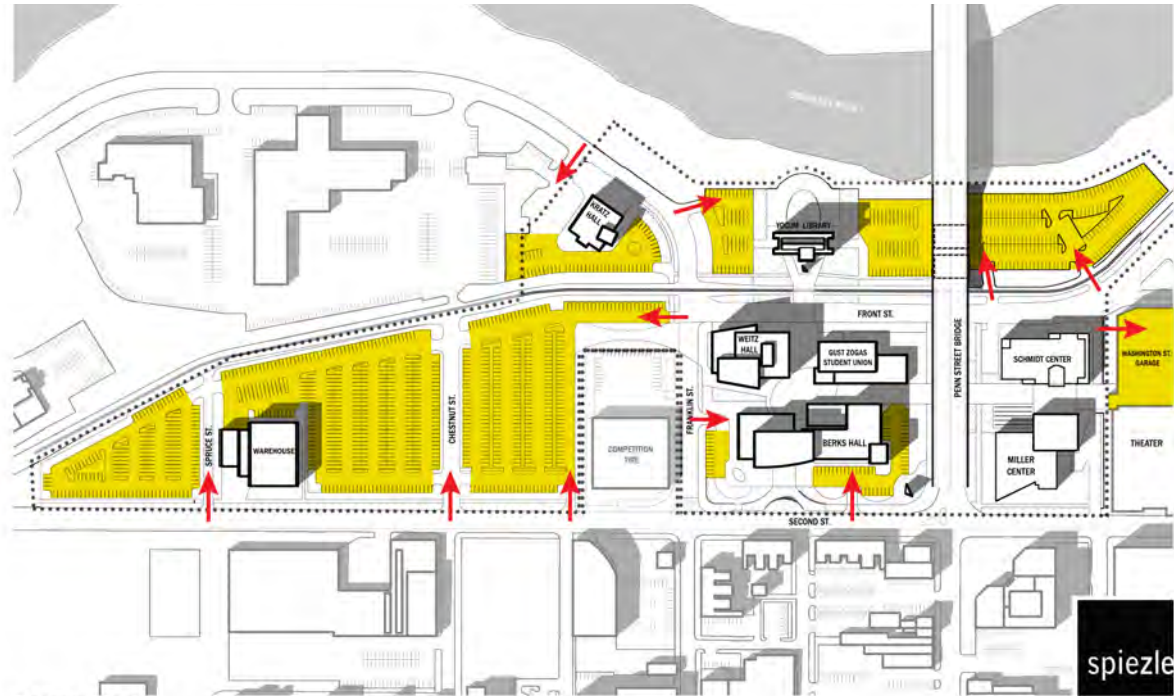


# RECOMMENDATIONS

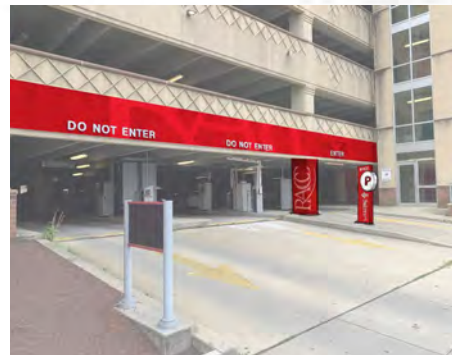
## Wayfinding

### 2. Identify Parking

Identify entrances to RACC parking lots and garage. Include the brand when possible.

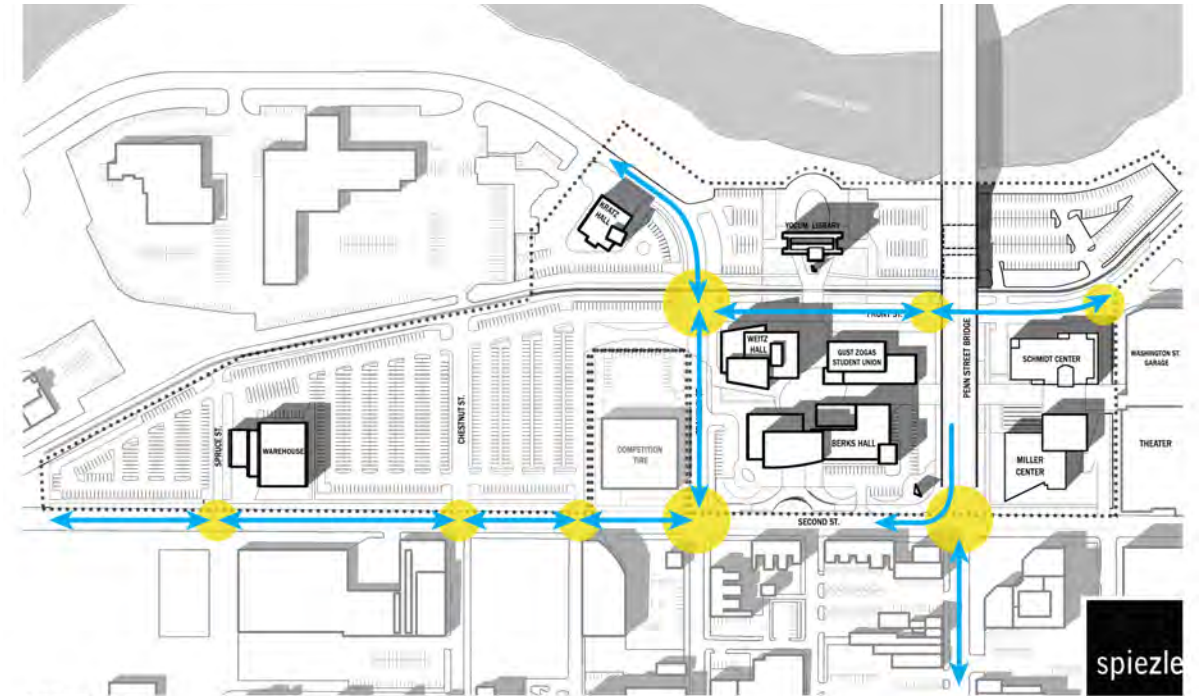


MASTER PLAN



### 3. Vehicular Experience

Direct to major destinations such as parking and buildings along the perimeter and throughout campus.



MASTER PLAN



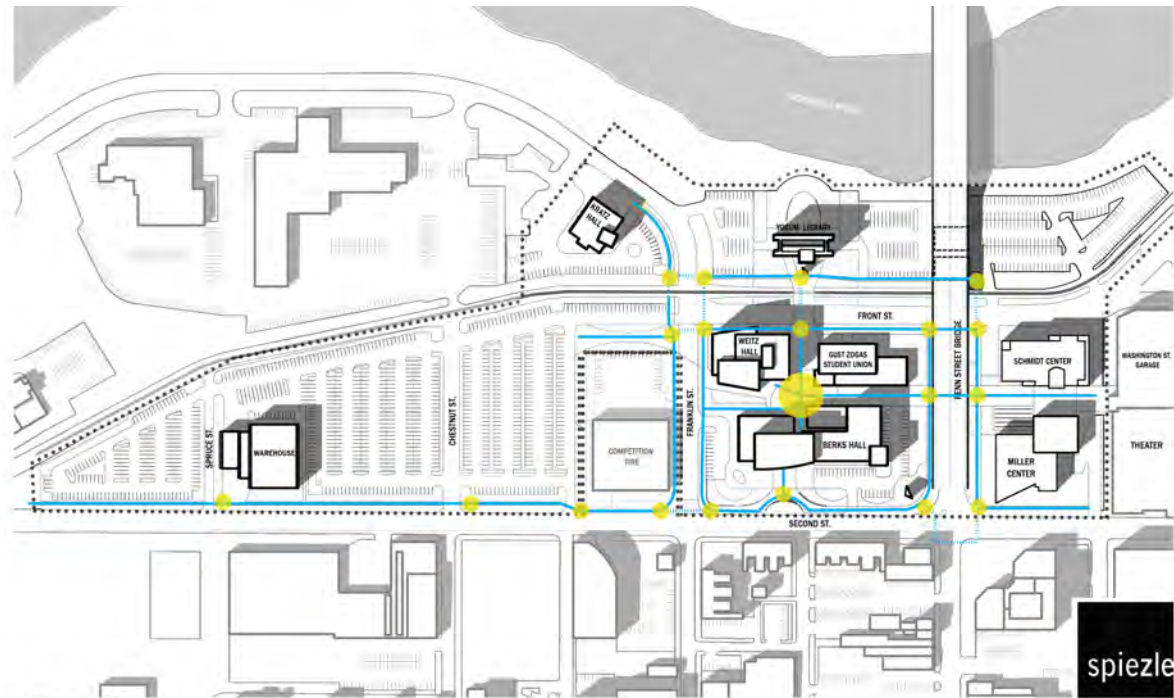


# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Wayfinding

### 4. Pedestrian Experience

Implement a system of directional signs along pedestrian paths. Direct to buildings, parking and amenities and update the campus map for better legibility.

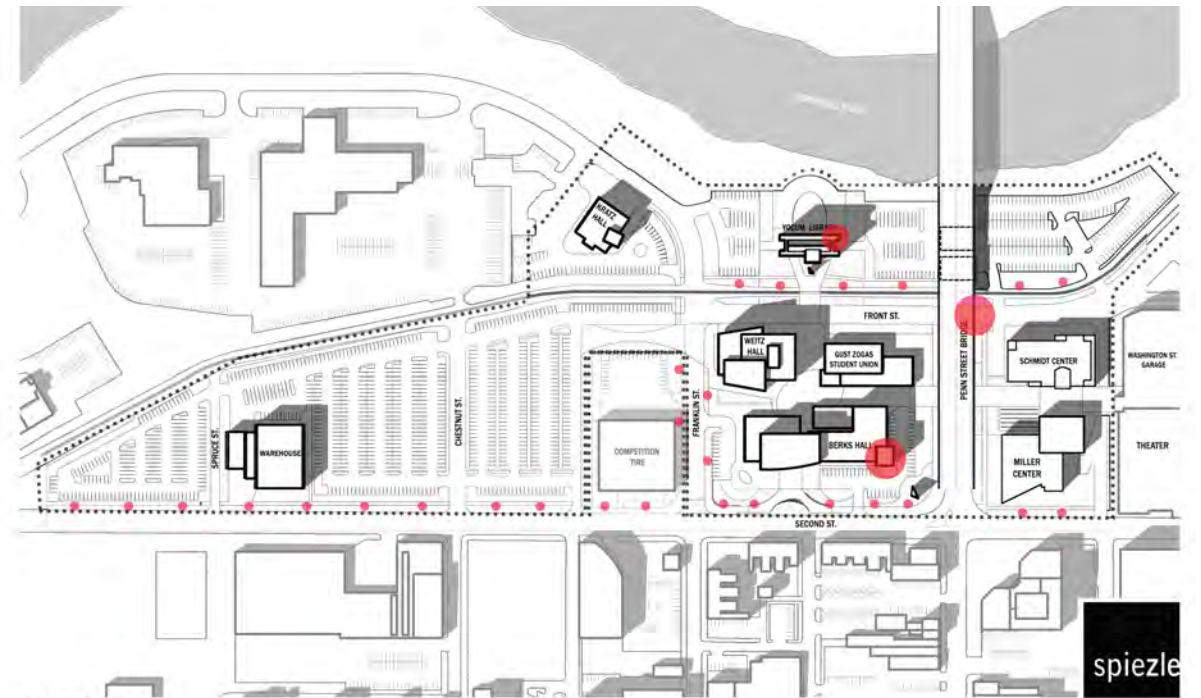


MASTER PLAN

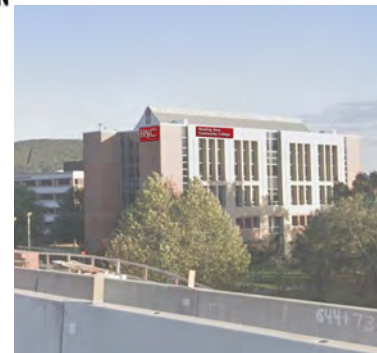


### 5. Define the Campus Edge

Use brand elements such as banners and skyline signs to identify the campus from pedestrian and vehicular approaches.



MASTER PLAN



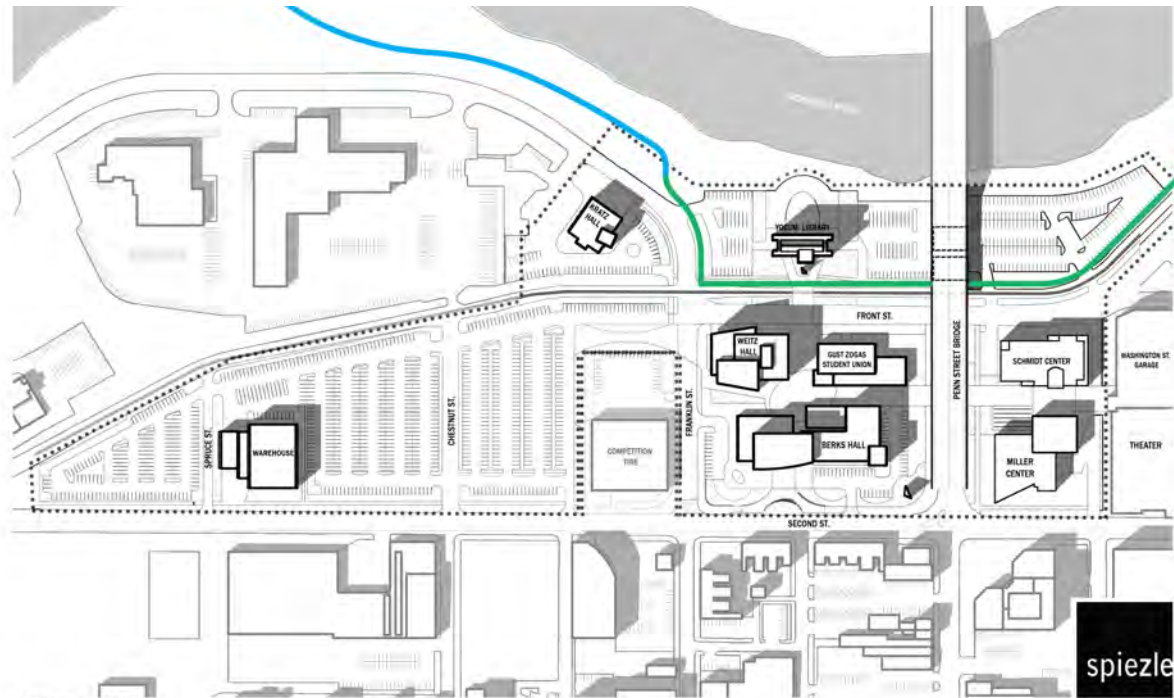


# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Wayfinding

### 6. Connect to the Schuylkill River Trail

Connect the campus to the River Trail with signage and brand elements along the relocated trail on Front Street.

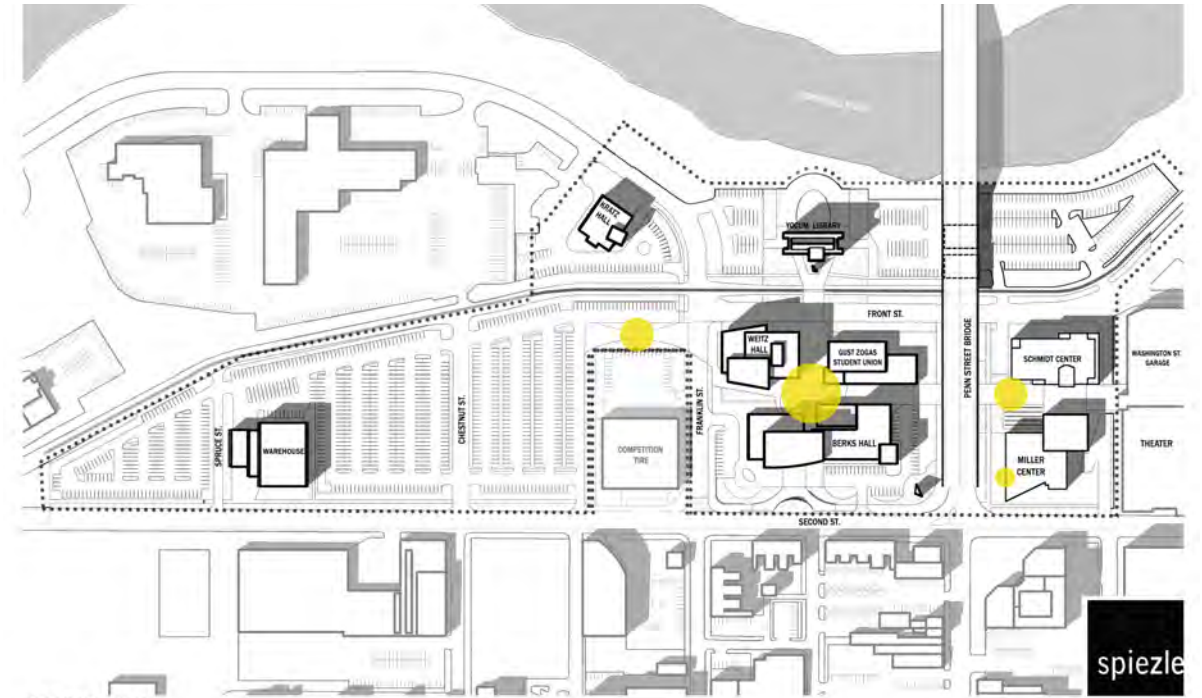


MASTER PLAN



### 7. Brand Messaging & Story Telling

Provide spaces on campus where RACC brand messaging and storytelling can be displayed. Banners, window graphics, and inserts allow for content to change over time.



MASTER PLAN



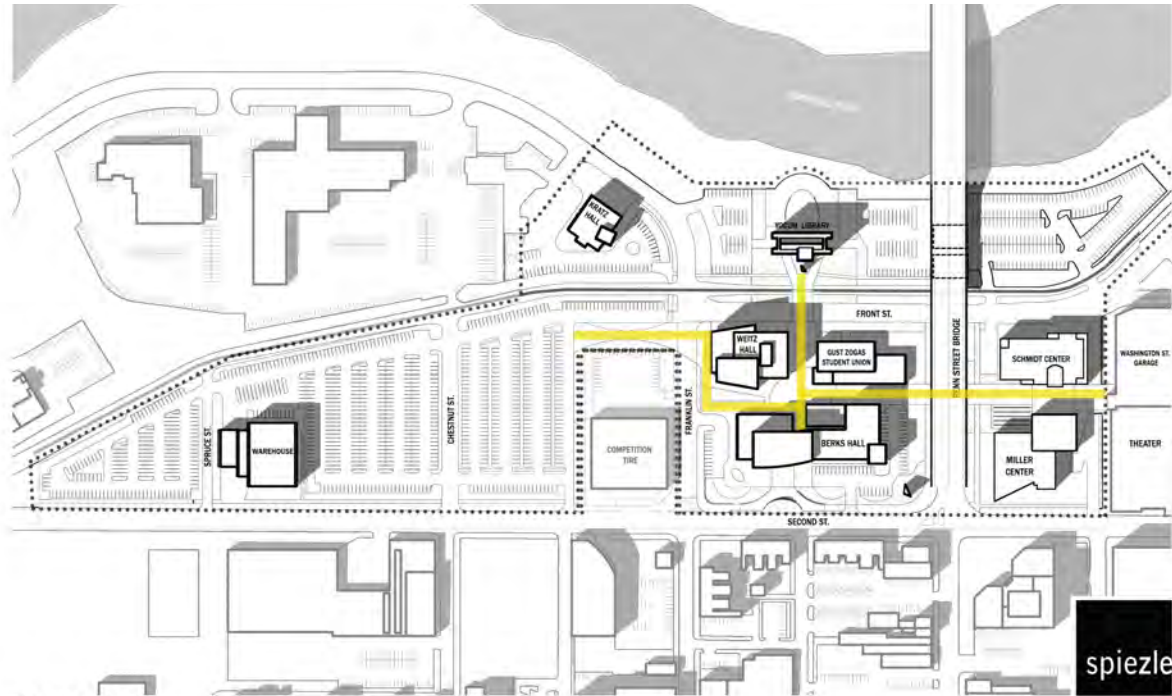


# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Wayfinding

### 8. Campus Connectivity

The campus is divided by Penn Street Bridge. Emphasize central pedestrian paths with landscaping, lighting and signage to connect the campus.

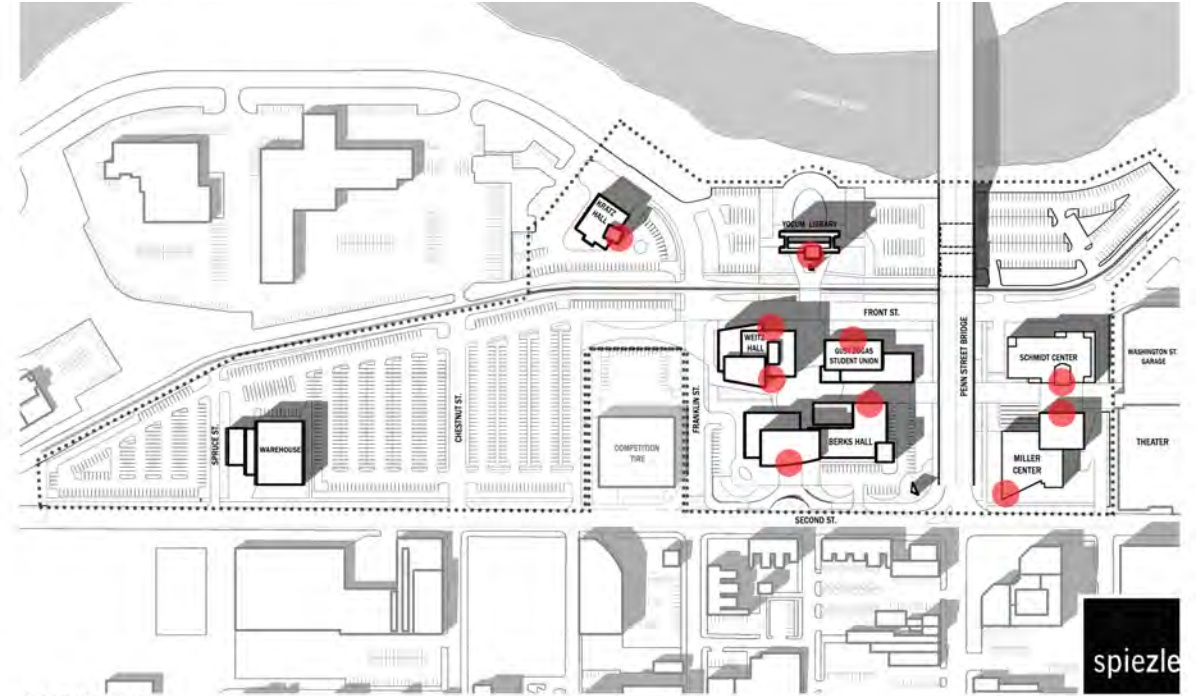


MASTER PLAN



### 9. Building Identification

Identify building entrances with architectural elements such as lettering and color to create a bold arrival moment.



MASTER PLAN





## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing

Reading Area Community College's campus facilities are generally in good condition. A 2018 Facility Condition Assessment conducted by Entech Engineering, Inc found the buildings to be in "Good" to "Excellent" condition, as per Facility Condition Index (FCI) rating, with the exception of Kratz Hall, which was in "Fair" condition. The FCI is calculated as a ratio of the cost of deferred maintenance projects to the building's current replacement value. There were few high priority mechanical, electrical, plumbing or fire protection projects, but many of the building systems have reached or will reach the end of their useful lives within the next 5-10 years. Renovations proposed as part of the Master Plan will provide excellent opportunities to replace major pieces of equipment or entire systems as part of larger campus-wide projects.

In many of the buildings, the mechanical components are 10-27 years old. The proposed renovations and additions in the Master Plan will include replacement of the existing roof top units and the incorporation of additional units to serve the new additions, where applicable. Most of the buildings have packaged roof top VAV systems that can be modified or expanded to meet the needs of new or reprogrammed space as laid out in the Master Plan.

The electrical service will likely need to be upgraded or replaced to Berks and Weitz Halls, and possibly for the Miller Center. The existing power supply does not have the capacity to support the proposed additional space for those facilities. The remaining buildings should be able to accommodate the minor additional demands of the proposed modifications.

Master Plan renovations will also provide an opportunity to upgrade lighting, restroom fixtures, and fire protection system features. While these items are not deferred maintenance and are in working order, some of these components are older or dated.



Berks Hall



Miller Center

## RECOMMENDATIONS

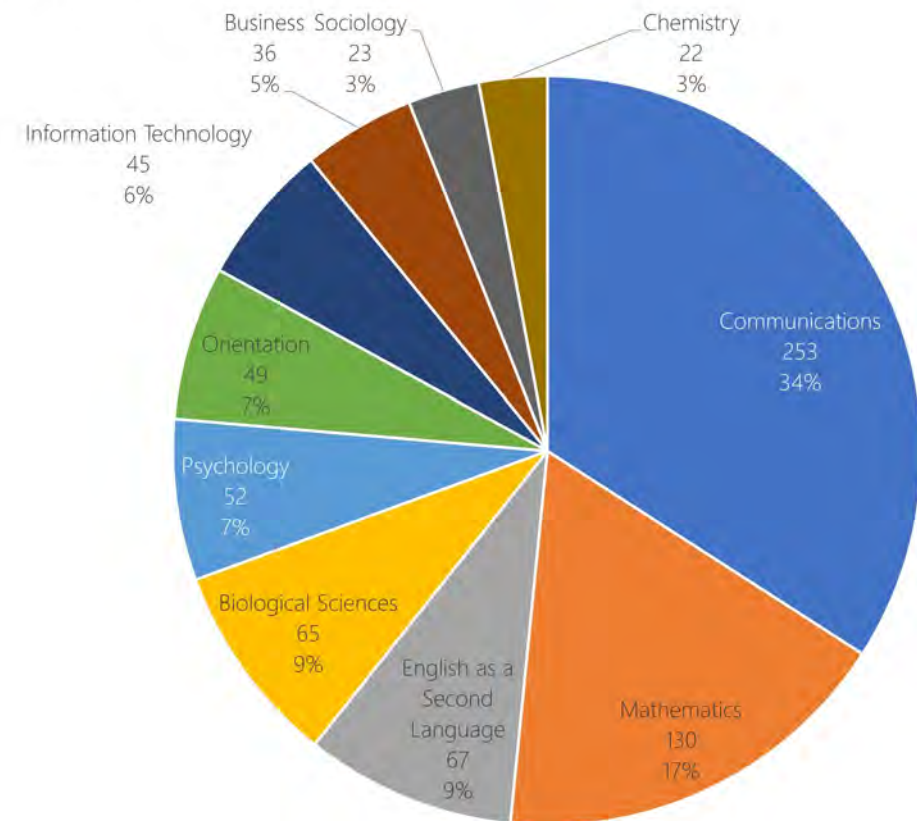
# Classroom Utilization

As part of Reading Area Community College's new master plan, an in-depth exploration of classroom utilization occurred across campus. In July 2019, stakeholders were interviewed from across the College to share their thoughts on the current state of classrooms, changing pedagogies, and perceived needs. The discussion focused on pedagogical approach, support for students outside the formal classroom environment, and the quality and availability of classroom space, particularly as it relates to furniture, room layouts, sight lines, and WiFi coverage. Stakeholders also expressed some concerns over the quantity of classroom space, particularly during peak times. To better understand these issues, data was analyzed from the College's room inventory and course schedule. The analysis strongly suggests that issues with classroom availability are likely the result of the college's cultural and space management practices, and to some extent, space quality. The data argues strongly that there is likely no need for a net increase in classroom space on campus.

In the analysis, classrooms were examined as designated for credit-bearing instruction and community education/non-credit-bearing instruction separately. A "point in time" analysis was performed using the busiest week of the Fall 2018 semester (the week with the largest number of hours of scheduled instruction). How often classrooms are used for scheduled instruction and how many seats are filled when this instruction takes place were explored.

The College's classroom utilization profile generally shows soft use with respect to both credit- and non-credit delivery; and that strategic and renewal impacts of potential projects, or additive space needs other than classrooms, particularly student-oriented collaboration and support spaces, should likely be the determining factors in prioritization decisions.

**Space Utilization** Classroom Weekly Room Hours by Program (top 10)  
Fall 2018, Credit-bearing courses

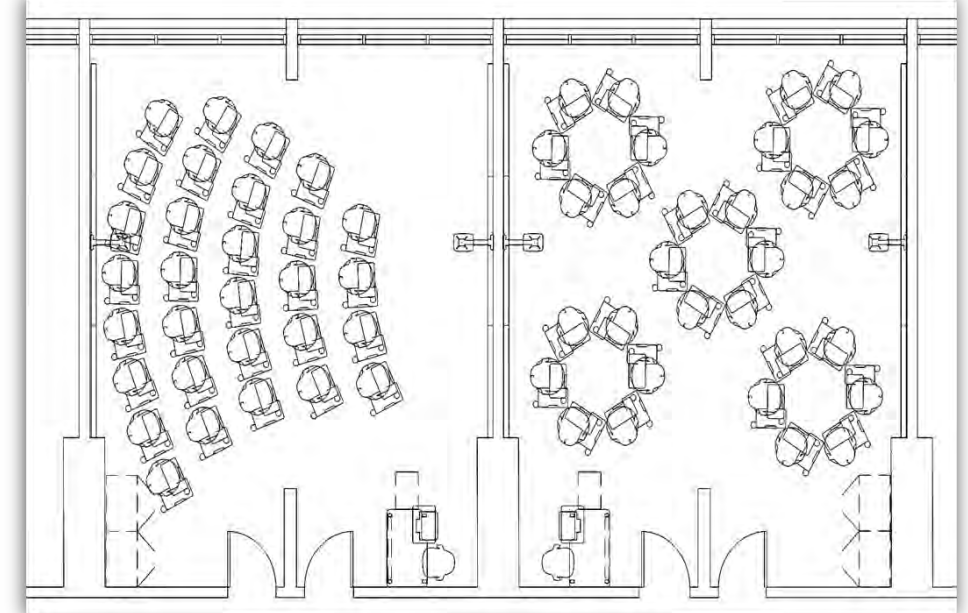
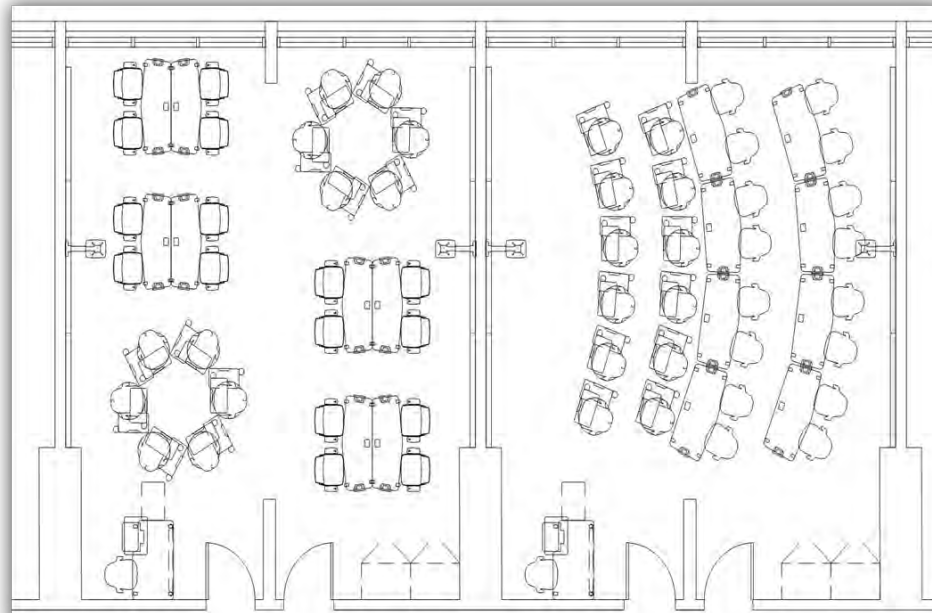




## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Active Learning

Active Learning classrooms are student-centered, technology-rich spaces that allow for ultimate flexibility in room configuration to allow for highly collaborative pedagogy while still supporting more traditional teaching methods. The existing classroom offerings and furniture limitations at RACC should be updated substantially with new, highly flexible furniture options coupled with modification to classrooms and potential break out spaces adjacent to classrooms.



Steelcase Inspiration Imagery

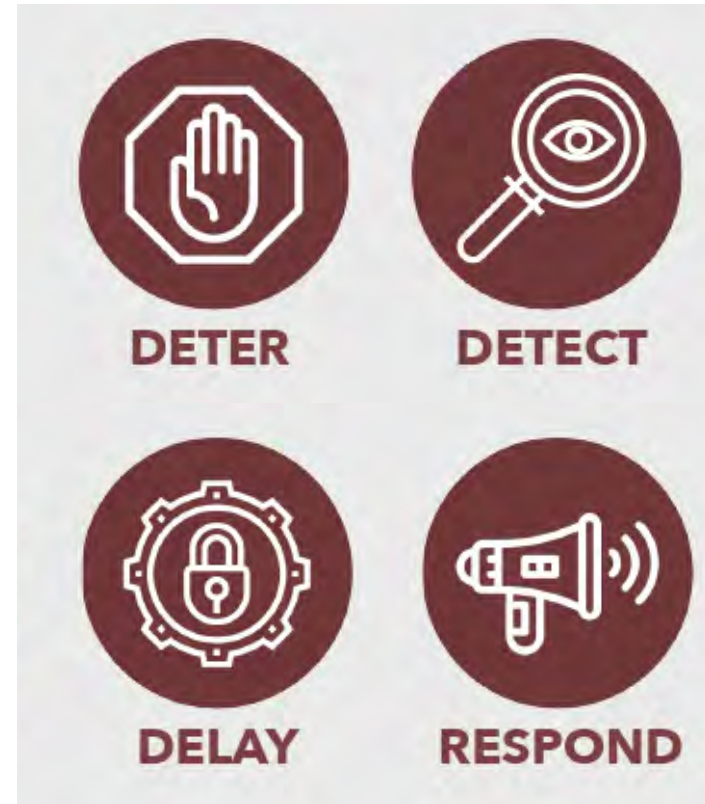


Existing Berks Hall classroom

## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Security

Safety at RACC is critical, as it is on any higher education institution. An effective safety program begins with a comprehensive facility assessment. The master planning team's security consultant, Facility Engineering Associates (FEA) performed a Physical Security Vulnerability Assessment which fell into four main categories: deterrence, detection, delay and response. The ability of a facility and its employees within to deter, detect, delay and respond to an incident indicates the effectiveness of the security measures. The security assessment evaluated security systems, products and practices.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Site Lighting

RACC was first an assemblage of existing non-academic buildings and properties repurposed through time that grew with the addition of new buildings. In this situation as at many colleges, site lighting can be a mixed assemblage. Creating a standard campus site lighting fixture with the College's banner on it will give a sense of visual consistency and help communicate the brand image of the campus. The selected lights will be installed when any new projects are implemented and all other fixtures could be replaced over time based on availability of funding. The fixture to be selected should be stately and timeless so that the fixture is available as time moves on so that we can truly achieve consistency.



Team Fitz Graphics

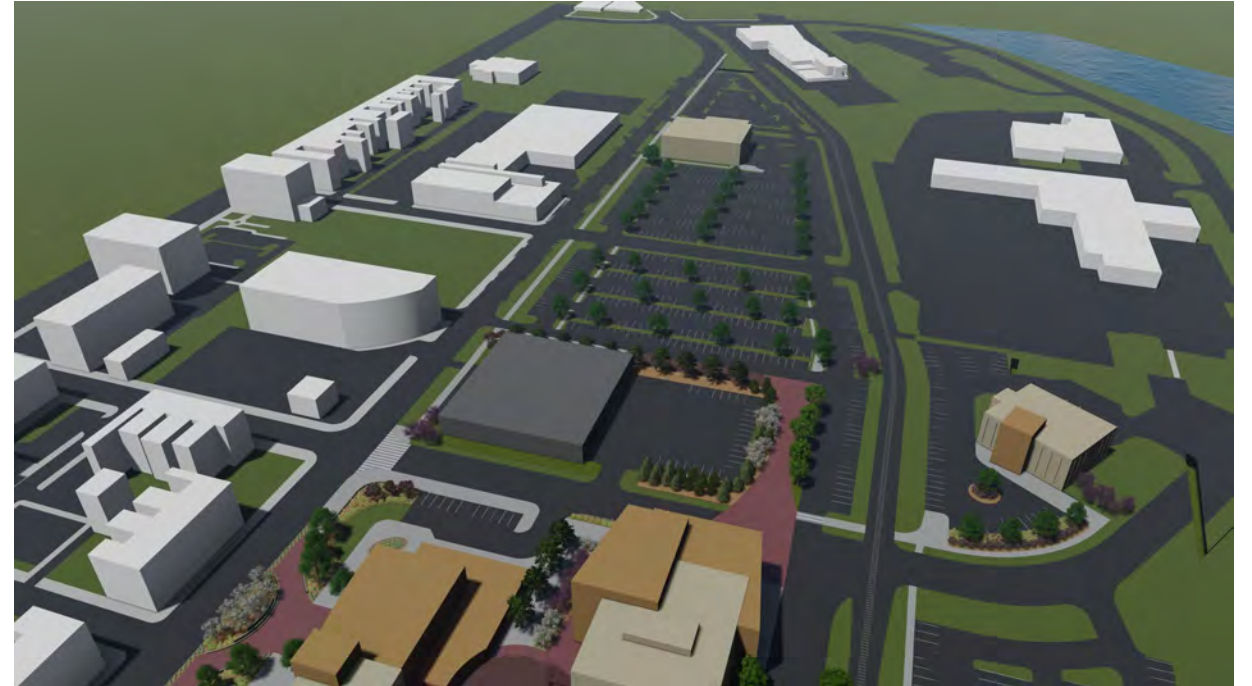
## RECOMMENDATIONS

# Parking/Land Development

The campus' existing parking has sufficient space for its current population of students and staff. Parking observations revealed that parking was at 89% capacity at peak time. If the proposed site improvements are implemented, some parking spaces will be eliminated and additional parking will have to replace those spaces and account for increased population that the improvements may bring. The school could inquire about obtaining more spaces to make up the loss of spaces and growth or create additional parking areas on site. Currently the south end of campus has open areas and parking could be installed with little disturbance to the campus. Additionally, the existing parking garage where RACC rents space has considerable excess capacity. Providing landscaping screening at new parking areas and along public roadways will create a softer buffer to screen the asphalt pavement. Parking at the south end of the site will direct traffic away from the center of campus while reducing some of the traffic congestion within the campus.

As enrollment increases and the area around campus is developing, consideration should be taken about pedestrian safety and circulation. Providing larger and more defined pedestrian crossings at Front Street and Franklin Street will create safer access and improve pedestrian access. Removing parking along Front Street and implementing traffic calming devices in the street will help create a safer crossing environment for the pedestrians. Additionally, installing more walkways throughout campus will promote easier pedestrian accessibility and better circulation around campus.

The proposed improvements can be integrated within the campus without creating major impediments for implementation. As the proposed improvements move forward into design, city requirements will need to be reviewed for setbacks, stormwater management and impervious coverage. Variances and waivers maybe required as the proposed improvements are more detailed in design.





# Potential Phasing

- ◆ Signage/Wayfinding not affected by future construction
- ◆ Berks Hall including The CORE, Hardscaping and Landscaping, Pedestrian Improvements not affected by future construction; Kratz Hall transition to administrative space
- ◆ SUB - addition/renovation and associated work
- ◆ Weitz Hall—addition/renovations and associated work
- ◆ Yocum Library and associated work
- ◆ Warehouse Renovation
- ◆ Miller Center Addition



## CONCLUSION

# Where Do We Go From Here?

A master plan needs to grow from its institution in order to be the most effective, appropriate, and implementable. This plan has succeeded at achieving the goals set by the institution's strategic goals, project mission statement, and core elements. The best plans must be flexible due to changing priorities, availability of funding, changing student needs, etc. This plan was created by a talented team from within RACC, the planning team, and the broader RACC community given the information that was available at the time of the study. The information in this plan will communicate why decisions were made so that when other opportunities arise for RACC that may be different than anticipated, the plan can morph easily with those changes while keeping core ideas and goals intact. This will ensure that RACC's campus can continue to evolve to best support the wonderful people who are proud to be fulfilling the mission of the Reading Area Community College.





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