Our initial observations

Carleton is a special place built on four elements place, city, campus and culture.

Carleton has reached a point of maturity.

Carleton is interested in securing a long term future including a vision for a sustainable whole.

The distribution of people, tasks and activities is ‘messy’; this is a mixed-use environment.

Past plans have proposed order, but have not been implemented because Carleton is like a living organism - not a static place.

Decision making is culture driven, creating a place that is unique to this culture.
**Disconnects**

- Highway 19
- Houses in the adjacent neighborhood
- Location of recreation facilities in floodplain
- Parking
- Pedestrian / vehicular conflicts
- Lighting
- Campus materials and scale of sidewalks
- Building materials

**Legacy places**

- Lilac Hill
- Lights on Hill of Three Oaks
- Lyman Lakes
- Upper/Lower Arb

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**Two possible reasons for disconnects**

- ‘Incrementalism’
  
  *Decisions made in increments can destroy the legacy.*

- Lack of clear direction
  
  *Incremental activities have not added up to a whole*
Carleton Core Values

Carleton is a mature, diverse, ever changing, and resilient culture that remains committed to liberal arts.

Carleton’s culture has determined and continues to determine the physical patterns of the campus.

At the core of this culture are these values:

- Commitment to the liberal arts
- Community of excellence
- Collegial community
- Commitment to quality faculty, staff and students
- Learning as a joint venture
- Education and living are engaged with the outside world
The Northfield landscape is a diverse mosaic of geological and ecological systems and edges.

Carleton is perched on the confluence of these systems.
The regional landscape is a continuum that runs from urban forest and domestic garden, through parkland and suburban landscapes, to upland forests, floodplain forests, farm fields, meadows and prairies.
Carleton integrates all of these landscapes within its campus.
The best buildings that form the legacy of Carleton architecture tend to be small, proud and highly articulated, with a sense of dignity, humanity and personality.
Originally these buildings were placed widely, emphasizing the horizontal nature of the Mid-western landscape and a great porosity to the horizons.
The integration of buildings in the landscape made a seamless transition from town to campus to rural Minnesota.

*The physical legacy of Carleton has been boundless.*
The organization of buildings and use is somewhat chaotic with irreverent mixing of living, learning, working, playing and celebrating.
This unique and somewhat messy pattern fits the highly eclectic, integrated and collegial culture of the College.
The physical college has grown and diversified with maturity and with new forms of knowledge, new technologies and a changing American culture. Some physical changes have reinforced the legacy and some have not.
Many American colleges have responded to these changes by increasing organization, segregating uses, increasing densities, enclosing spaces, and organizing infrastructure into large, efficient systems.
Since the 1950’s and the Yamasaki years, Carleton has followed this pattern.

If Carleton continues to organize and enclose spaces it will destroy its legacy with the landscape.
Could it be that in 100 years Carleton will be even more unique and magical if this legacy is restored and enhanced?

This vision could be a powerful part of the identity and experience that will extend Carleton’s success throughout the coming years.
We recommend that Carleton embrace landscape as the overarching framework and foundation of physical planning, building and growth decisions for a hundred years.

If this proposal is successful Carleton could become the most holistic, authentic and sustainable campus in America.

With this vision, the core values of Carleton will be embodied, expressed and made physical.
Findings

The distinct geographical location, the decisions that have been made over the years, the unique Carleton culture, and the Midwestern landscape give clues to what the future of the campus should hold.
Carleton lies at a significant regional, physiographic edge.

- Glacial
- Geologic
- Landscape
Carleton also lies at a local, cultural edge between urban and rural environments.
The culture of the College has led the organization of the campus.

The campus has matured as the culture has matured.
The landscape is the defining aspect of the campus.

• Trees
• Lawn
• The Bald Spot
• The Arb
• The Hill of Three Oaks
• Prairie
• Formal Plantings
The campus sits on a flat bluff overlooking the Cannon River and Spring Creek (Lyman Lake) Valleys.
Until the 1950’s most buildings were loosely scattered about the bluff, creating a porous edge.

Buildings were set within the landscape but did not define spaces; with views to and visible from the surrounding landscape.
The best buildings are relatively small and sit proudly within the landscape.

Architecture now is eclectic but inconsistent.
Buildings with ‘personality’ and careful detailing reflect the care and pride of the people of Carleton.
Contextual buildings acknowledge the landscape and contribute to the campus as a whole.
The dark red brick of the buildings contrasts richly with the landscape.
Successful light-colored buildings are made of natural stone with careful attention to beautiful detailing.
Traditional vertical windows are predominant except where there is a special function.
Buildings that sit proudly on the landscape display strength and confidence.
Indoor/outdoor relationships engage the students with the climate, the seasons and the landscape-
and allow for varied learning environments.
Roofs and landscapes acknowledge the sky.
Landscapes also have personality that convey regional, cultural, and personal meaning.
Successful landscape edges relate to changes in slope.
Well-defined edges reinforce a sense of place and care.
Passing through the landscape enriches the experience.
Design Principles and Frameworks

*The culture of Carleton College should continue to be expressed in the physical campus.*

*The patterns and legacies of the campus should inform the framework for the future campus.*

*A strong downtown community is vital to Northfield and to Carleton College.*

*As a special place within the Minnesota natural and agrarian landscape, Carleton College should build a continuum between the urban and naturalized environments.*
The campus landscape should embody the culture, character, climate, patterns and materials of the Midwest.
All aspects of Carleton are intertwined and the physical campus should build upon the mixed-use nature of the culture.
As a responsible steward of the land, Carleton College is guided by principles that embody sustainable solutions.

Design Principles
On the edge of downtown and the neighborhood, Carleton should contribute to the vitality of both.

Design Principles
The porosity of the edges and the views to the surrounding landscape are fundamental to the identity of the campus.
At an edge, but –

vistas create a sense of boundlessness

landscape edges are soft

campus uses cross sensitively into the neighborhood
The city grid and views along the streets influence the order of the campus.
Building placement and plantings should preserve and improve physical openings to engage the surrounding landscape.
Views to the surrounding landscape link the campus with the regional landscape and the neighborhood.
Carleton should be predominantly pedestrian.
Buildings should be serviced from the perimeter -
Parking should be moved out of the core -
Placed in small, dispersed lots on the edges of campus -
Creating a truly pedestrian core campus.
With emergency vehicles accommodated primarily on roads and where necessary, on appropriately scaled sidewalks.
Lighting should be subtle, consistent and appropriate to balance safety, security and the experience of the night sky.
Carleton has grown in recurring cycles for over 100 years.

*Future growth should consider how to accommodate new buildings while preserving the legacy of the Carleton landscape.*
There are significant landscapes that should never be built upon.
There are logical places for placing new buildings.
There are places that in the future should be opened to create connections to the surrounding landscape. At the end of their life cycle, these buildings should be removed to reestablish landscape connectivity.
There are select sites that should be reserved for very special buildings.
There are areas that could be built upon, but only with careful master planning.
The landscapes of the arboretum and core campus should be integrated both physically and conceptually.

Design Principles
The Pre-Settlement Landscape

- Floodplain Forest
- Upland Forest
- Savanna
- Prairie
The Landscape Today

- Floodplain Forest
- Upland Forest
- Savanna
- Prairie
- Urban
- Agriculture
- Conifers

The Landscape Today
A Future Landscape

Upland Forest

Prairie

Savanna

Floodplain Forest

Agriculture

Conifers

Urban

A Future Landscape
The landscape should be the fundamental fabric of the campus, unifying the architecturally eclectic buildings.

Design Principles
The Campus Landscape of 2103
Next Steps

Policy Discussions

Neighborhood
Parking and Vehicle Circulation
Detailed Strategies and Recommendations

Landscape
Site Planning and Architecture
Pedestrian Environment
Lighting

Next Steps