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Our Town and Gown: An Evaluation of the Relationship Between The City of Oxford and The University of Mississippi

Pierce Werner
University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

OUR TOWN & GOWN:
AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY OF OXFORD
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

By
Pierce Martin Werner

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Approved by

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Advisor: Professor Stephanie Showalter-Otts

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Reader: Dr. John J. Green

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Reader: Dr. Debra Young

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ABSTRACT
PIERCE MARTIN WERNER: Our Town and Gown
(Under the direction of Stephanie Showalter-Otts)

This work is a study of the relationship between Oxford, Mississippi and its primary institution: the University of Mississippi. Problems and conflicts have long plagued the relationships between colleges and their host cities as the separate bodies each have their own objectives and responsibilities, which may not always align. This work seeks to analyze the strategies and objectives of both the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi (UM) through the examination of their published documents regarding objectives and, especially, land use planning. This analysis can be used to determine the fortitude of UM and Oxford's relationships in terms of overcoming or avoiding conflict in the future as they both continue to grow. The methods used were a review of primary and secondary documents as well as multiple personal and email interviews with officials from both the University and the City. The relationship between Oxford and UM was found to be limitedly affected by many common issues experienced in town-gown relationships with the greatest weakness being complications related to student housing. Knowledge of these deficiencies or weak points in comparison to other town-gown relationships and strategies is used to determine possible solutions which could be implemented specifically in the case of Oxford-UM to improve the local relationship.

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Chapter I: Introduction

    Colleges and universities in the United States are more than institutions of higher learning. They are major players in the social and economic fabric of the cities and towns in which they are located and in the future of their broader communities. It is fair to say that colleges and towns are inextricably linked in terms of their mutual success and prosperity.

    Colleges are in many ways dependent on the towns that encompass them, and these towns are affected greatly by the benefits and demands that flow from the presence of the college. In many ways, it is a symbiotic relationship between college and town; however, it may often be difficult to identify which of the two actors in the relationship is the host because the city does not always hold the most influencing power. The relationship between a college or university and the town or city in which it is situated has come to be known as "Town-Gown" or "University-Community" relationships. These relationships are an important focus of study because of the serious consequences the nature and success of the relationship can have on both entities. Evaluating the success and failure of such relationships can offer insight into the future planning for both the school and the town.

    This thesis is intended to highlight at least some of the key general points of interactions and interdependency of town-gown relationships. Using these points, it will focus on the specific issues facing Oxford and the University of Mississippi regarding

their own town-gown relationship. This analysis will come from the current planning efforts by both to chart their respective futures and success.

A.   The Special Relationship between a College and the Town in which it is Located

Colleges and their host towns are often inseparably linked with it being common to hear people talk about great college towns. In fact, it is difficult to think of a college or university without also identifying the town in which it is located. You most likely cannot separate the two, or, at least, do not think of schools that way. More pointedly, can they be separated in most minds?

The list of great college towns, and the schools which make them great, is plentiful. Well-known examples are: Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina, the town of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia, Clemson and the duly named Clemson University, and Athens and the University of Georgia. Perhaps none of these relationships, however, are more notable than the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi. Here there is a strong linked identity between the institution and the town.

The town of Oxford and the University of Mississippi are both regular recipients of acclaim and recognitions from many publications including *Southern Living*, *Garden and Gun*, *USA Today*, *thebestcolleges.org*, *Forbes*, and the *Princeton Review* to name a few. These recognitions vary and include acknowledgement as one of the best college towns, most beautiful campuses, best education values, and a great many general articles about experiences and guides to local features. The mass of coverage for Oxford and the University distinguish them as particularly extraordinary.

The town is critical for the school in terms of attracting students, satisfying parents, and aiding in the recruitment and retention of faculty and administrators. The town is a major part of defining the overall quality of life which is so important to the success of the school.

Conversely, the school is vital to the social, cultural, and economic development of the town and surrounding community due to its profound influence and attraction factors. Often called "anchor institutions," a major college or university is an important citizen in any town or city in which it is located. The college or university, however, is likely the dominant citizen and driving force in what is called a college town. In a college town it is difficult for most students, faculty, and visitors to appreciate where the town ends and where the campus begins. Though the Greek architecture pillars and the stone entranceways may define geographic boundaries, the character and identity of the two are amalgamated.

For both the campus and the town, there are shared concerns about facilities, utilities, cultural centers, social centers, safety and health, population management, economic development, and land use. The demand for each of these items or services is constantly evolving. There is a never-ending need to manage them in the present as well as plan for them in the future. Neither the school nor the town can have the economic means to take on the complete burden of satisfying these needs. Duplication of services however, is wasteful and colleges and towns must therefore work together.

What is the choice – mutual planning and shared recognition and responsibility. This planning and collaboration must address the potential benefits and burdens for both the school and the town. Symbiosis is, by definition, a close relationship for the benefit

of both organisms. Thus, to plan effectively for the future both the school and the town

must decide what they want for the future, what they can invest for the future and how

they can cooperate toward that shared future which will be mutually beneficial.

In college towns, the expansive role and influence that the modern university has

on its neighboring area has given rise to ample opportunity for mutual success and, all too

often, friction. Dr. Roger Kemp, an accomplished municipal CEO and noted figure in the

realm of city management, writes in his book *Town and Gown Relations: A Handbook of

Best Practices*: "Some issues and problems evolved over time since each community and

school (the town and gown) have had separate governing bodies with different priorities

and loyalties and shared the same limited geographic space" (1). In these environments,

competing interests of the schools and towns have often manifested in matters such as

land use and development – where the growth of the school causes strain on the city or

town (and vice versa) in the forms of parking, traffic, and housing problems.

These kinds of problems have given rise to the need for collaborative

relationships between schools and their host municipalities. Each entity needs a

relationship with the other capable of diminishing the common problems inherent in the

school and town sharing their limited space. These partnerships are directly accountable

for many successes in the resolution of town-gown conflicts. Under the previous

conventional model it was believed a university "need not form partnerships with its

community to carry out its traditional mission" (Young 71). The prior style of town-

gown relations was less involved as, historically, the college was at the edge of town with

the academic community being removed from local society. Issues arose with the

"university's growing autonomy [and] its independence from local control" which even

resulted in violence since the time that universities arose with one such conflict between

Yale students and New Haven citizens as recently as the late 19th century (Manahan 717).

The sovereign and elitist status of the university did not often function well alongside the

growing resentment from citizens.

The character of these relationships has shifted in modern times. The

emotionalism that spurred conflict between the two has given way to rationalism as

communities realize that having a university within its geographic location can be much

more beneficial than it is detrimental (Manahan 717). Dr. Lawrence L. Martin, professor

of public affairs and director of the Center for Community Partnerships at the University

of Central Florida; Hayden Smith, a Ph.D. student in public affairs at the University of

Central Florida and a graduate research assistant at the Center for Community Partnerships;

and Wende Phillips, director of research and administration at the Center for Community

Partnerships at the time, wrote on this turn to collaboration in their article for the *Public

Sector Innovation Journal*: However, "Based on their failed experiences, university and

community leaders began to speculate that viable long term strategies may require innovative

collaborations. Pragmatically, universities began to appreciate that in order to grow and

prosper, their futures were inextricably linked with those of their surrounding communities

(and vice versa)" (4). Richard A. Manahan, as vice president for business affairs at

Radford University, further observed this recognition of the link between collaboration

and prosperity in 1980. He observed:

> [I]f both the university and the town realize that mutual cooperation and
>
> coordination means mutual prosperity and if open lines of communication are
>
> maintained between the town and the institution at all levels, then the problems
>
> that eventually emerge between the town and the institution can be approached

with prudent vision, and usually dealt with to the mutual satisfaction of both

parties. (717)

B.   Oxford and The University of Mississippi

1.   A shared history

The City of Oxford was established in 1837. The city's founders deliberately

named it after the university town of Oxford, England, in the hopes of becoming the

home of a university in the future. The city's aspirations were realized in 1841 when

Oxford was designated by the state legislature to be the location of Mississippi's first

university.

The University of Mississippi officially opened seven years later with eighty

students enrolled. The University and Oxford are essentially one and the same, growing

and prospering together ever since. The University is at the heart of Oxford's identity

despite only occupying less than one tenth of the land in Oxford. As previously

mentioned, both the University of Mississippi and the City of Oxford have received many

laurels and awards, including recognition for the beautiful campus and many

achievements for the University. The University and the town are indistinguishably

regarded as a cultural center in the region and as one of the nation's most famous and

greatest college towns.

2.   A future of growth

Currently, Oxford and UM are experiencing a level of growth that is truly

unprecedented. The University is a key driver of this growth, *Vision 2037* marks that the

"City's founding and growth has been almost exclusively dependent on the location and

growth of the University of Mississippi" since Oxford has no major features like

railways, agricultural centers, or rivers that would drive its growth or importance (7). The steady increase in enrollment at the University is a driving factor with Fall 2015 enrollment reaching 23,838 students for all of the University's programs and 19,996 students at the Oxford Campus alone. This is a 38% increase in enrollment over the past decade and 14% in the past five years ("Facts & Statistics"). A short drive through campus, around the square in any direction, or down any major street in Oxford reflects the evidence of this growth and the amount of development and construction occurring.

Enrollment at the University of Mississippi continues to increase even as there is a decline of incoming freshmen amongst institutions of higher learning across the United States as a whole (*Vision* 23). At the same time, Oxford has experienced steady increase in its population. That increase, parallel to that of the University, is not unexpected. Oxford's population has increased 77.5% since the year 2000 (*Vision* 32). With so many changes, and so much growth occurring in both the city and the university, strategic planning decisions made now by both entities will be immensely influential in forming the future relationship of the town and the gown. Presently, some of the most critical strategic decisions relate to land use planning.

3.   Common Issues in Town-Gown Relations

As mentioned earlier, town-gown relations are often burdened by a number of issues that arise between the college or university and its host city or town. There are a multitude of common problems experienced by universities and towns, due to their unavoidable connection with one another. One would expect to see that as they each plan for the future, they would address the common issues and concerns.

A few of these widely recognized areas of common concern include: (a) transportation issues, like that of parking and traffic generated by a higher volume of vehicles; (b) residential issues, which can be related to the wide range of student or community housing issues; and (c) economic issues, such as the tax-exempt status of the institution. These issues may predominantly be felt by the city or town, causing conflict or hostility among those in the community and, therefore, fraying the relationship between the city and university as disputes occur. Clashes related to these issues can lead to the city filing lawsuits or taking other negative actions toward the university or vice versa.

These problems encountered in town-gown relations are more often a consequence of a multitude of factors rather than a product of a singular aspect of these relationships. Nonetheless, predominant themes are problems of land use and dealing with growth. Ultimately, the problems and issues in town-gown relations are often caused by failure to maintain communication or pursue collaborations for mutual prosperity, specifically when dealing with growth.

Dr. Yesim Sungu-Eryilmaz, a research associate for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in the fields of strategies and collaborations that balance economic and community development goals in urban areas (like those of universities), notes three great implications from competing interests of the university, town, and neighborhood in a policy report titled *Town-Gown Collaboration in Land Use and Development*:

> First, even in the era of the engaged university, land use and development
> processes at the campus edge will repeatedly put town–gown relations to the test.
> Second, nearly all real estate activities of universities and colleges are

multifaceted and have multiple stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and local governments. Third, land uses at the campus edge have become a crucial element in both the physical and socioeconomic character of cities and neighborhoods. (6)

While land availability and use may seem like a single example of conflict among institutions of higher learning and their host municipality, it is a particularly important one with very far-reaching implications. Most other issues in town-gown relationships can be related to the fundamental conflicts over the availability and use of land. The use and management of land has been a prominent source of conflict in town-gown relationships, and the level of physical growth seen by most universities and college towns in modern times has effects o this matter which could exacerbate already occurring problems. Without cooperation in an instance such as this, there will be predictable and consistent conflict as both institutions grow further. Dr. Yesim Sungu-Eryilmaz goes on to note that land use and development processes are often the most observable sources of conflict in town-gown relations as this urban land at the edge of campus is an area of competition as use for university activities as well as a neighborhood or city purposes (5-6). With the edge of campus often being the most visible sign of growth for a college or university, potential for friction in this area would only increase for universities with large rates of enrollment increase.

Oxford and the University of Mississippi experience similar friction over land use and growth. These common issues of transportation and parking, residential, and economics related effects are all present to some extent in this local town-gown relationship. As will be illustrated by deeper analysis of the planning documents and

interviews to be detailed, some of these shared issues are being addressed well, and some still lack proper focus. Overall, the town-gown relationship, reflected in current behavior and future plans of Oxford, possesses both strengths to be admired and expanded upon as well as weaknesses that should be addressed. Acknowledgement of these strengths and weaknesses regarding Oxford-UM handling of common problems is among the most important aspects of this thesis. Reflections on these matters serve to evaluate the University and City's overall relationship and lead to specific suggestions to improve this relationship in the future. The overall concept is to promote an increase in collaboration and cooperation between the two entities. Generally, the common issues of town-gown relationships can be solved better, or potentially avoided, through the use of productive levels of communication and collaborative efforts.

Chapter II: Town and Gown Plan for the Future

Both UM and Oxford are engaged in efforts to plan for the future. Each has developed written plans to guide the course of growth and change. These tangible documents are the best source of information related to the future plans of both the University and Oxford. Statements issued directly from those in leadership and advisory positions within each entity provide a sense of what leaders see on the horizon for this relationship, including a fortified acknowledgement of the other and an overall increase in communication and collaboration. Personal interviews with planning director Andrea Correll of Oxford and University architect Ian Banner illustrate the novel interest by both entities to cooperate despite historically independent interests. This section will provide an overview of key planning documents including: (i) the draft *Vision 2037* from the City of Oxford Planning Commission, containing the land use and broader goals for the future of Oxford; (ii) *UM 2020 Strategic Plan* from the University of Mississippi, containing the upcoming goals and strategic needs of the University; and (iii) the *University of Mississippi Master Plan from 2009*, the counterpart to Vision 2037, containing the development and land use plans of the University. However, the Master plan of the University is expected to be replaced in the near future with an updated master plan for 2016. Until this revision is finalized, current updated information will come from Ian Banner, the head architect of the University. The planning documents developed by the Town and the University offer insight into each institution's objectives, new policies, and land use determinations that will be critically analyzed in the upcoming chapters related

to particular issues and potential strengths and weaknesses in the town-gown relations in order to develop an evaluation of the overall Oxford-UM relationship.

A.   Oxford Plans and Goals: *Vision 2037*

The City of Oxford has developed the most up-to-date manifestation of its future goals and plans in the form of *Vision 2037*, the comprehensive plan for the bicentennial year of Oxford. The comprehensive nature of the plan means that the document is designed as a complete guide for the goals and objectives for the future actions of the Oxford community inline with its vision for both the near and distant future, or in this case up to the year 2037. This plan will also serve to inform land use planning and development permits as well as zoning. *Vision 2037* was developed by the City of Oxford Planning Commission led by Andrea Correll, the Director of Planning. It is very important in the scheme of Oxford and its history, as it is to set the new standard for growth, as well as land use policy in the city. The roughly 140-page document contains an extensive overview of the background and process by which *Vision 2037* was developed, with substantial amounts of data from studies conducted in the discovery phase of the process. The data made available in *Vision 2037* comes largely from studies conducted on behalf of the City during the 'Discovery' phase of the planning process, which is the most relevant and up-to-date data available for analysis.

Vision 2037 is intended to be a response to the extensive change that has occurred since the last future plan was created in 1999, *Vision 2020*. Put simply, this latest Vision document reflects a tremendous amount of change and identifies the issues to be addressed and resolved. Specific points of focus include: (i) overall growth of the City in terms of both population and land development; (ii) growth of the University of

Mississippi population and development of campus; and (iii) new concerns like those of the environment and other economic and philosophical issues. The document serves to answer the questions: How will City grow in the future? What are the priorities for a quality City? What forces are at work that will impact the future and how should the City best guide and shape its destiny?" (*Vision* 2). *Vision 2037* not only answers these questions in terms of goals and planning objectives, but also with fully developed applications and strategies for achieving them in accordance with Mississippi law. This allows for the *Vision 2037* plan to be "a highly articulated guide to the formulation of appropriate policies, codes and development decisions required to achieve Oxford's planning vision" (*Vision* 42).

 Vision 2037, as a guide for Oxford's future, is centered around the primary considerations of: (i) Oxford's guiding principles laid out in the previous plan, Vision 2020; (ii) adherence to "Smart Growth" principles, which revolve around combating urban sprawl and efficiency of land use; and (iii) a dominant focus on "Place Types," which are distinct types of areas such as rural and suburban (*Vision* 40-41). This focus on "place type" serves the purpose of preserving the character and quality of a particular kind of place using measured practices. There are seven of these "place types" identified in the document, with examples of development and treatment for each, including: natural, rural, suburban, urban, urban center, urban core, and special districts. While these are the listed areas of primary focus and consideration for *Vision 2037*, they consolidate to enforce another central aspect of the plan which is its function to introduce a form-based code to the City of Oxford.

At its core, one of the essential characteristics of Vision 2037 is a shift of

Oxford's land use and development policy from a conventional zoning regulation to a

form-based code. According to the Form-Based Codes Institute's website, a form based

code is:

> A land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-
> quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the
> organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere
> guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. (FBCI 2016)

Oxford's current regulation is a conventional zoning regulation where factors like density

of use, ingress and egress, parking requirements, and building height are specified when

approval of the development occurs. The new code would establish areas and

developments for multiple uses and would also seek to refine current developments while

adhering to the other principles of the plan such as a focus on smart growth and place

types.

Other aspects of *Vision 2037* include a tremendous amount of information

presented from the 'Discovery' aspect of the planning process which is used to evaluate

various aspects of Oxford's needs and issues. These sections of the plan reveal the impact

that the University has on the City of Oxford. This data comes from studies conducted

on behalf of the planning department to determine what actions by the city would be

needed in the near future. The primary factors of influence that the University has on the

city that are relevant to study in the Oxford-UM relationship include economics and

housing, existing mobility framework, and growth forecasts. Not surprisingly, these

stressors offer evidence of the need for collaboration between the town and gown.

An overarching theme of *Vision 2037* is the impact and significance of the University of Mississippi for obvious reasons. Almost all the subsections of the Discovery chapter of the document refer to the University's role in influencing the particular matter that is being addressed in that section, mostly due to its growth. In fact, the third sentence of the whole document states, "Its key institution, the University of Mississippi, has grown significantly" (*Vision* 2). The University is simply a factor of Oxford's comprehensive strategic plan that cannot be ignored. One of the primary reasons for a new comprehensive plan is the growth that Oxford has experienced with the University and its growing student population as a driving factor, recognized by *Vision 2037*. The consistently growing student population of UM has "helped pave the way for important growth in industry and commerce in the area" (*Vision* 7). This role is notably significant for an institution that accounts for only 831.1 acres (8.53%) of the total 9743.3 acres in Oxford.

Vision 2037 serves Oxford as a combination of land use plan and statement of goals and focus for the future of the city. The implementation index has many references to both ideals of the city as well as tangible goals and building plans. Overall, *Vision 2037* contains an overarching theme of collaboration and cooperation being a necessary component of the relationship between Oxford and UM. This collaboration is, in fact, visible as the director of facilities planning and head architect for the University, Ian Banner, is acknowledged as a member of the advisory committee for *Vision 2037*.

B.   The University of Mississippi Plans and Goals: *UM 2020*

The University of Mississippi developed a comprehensive strategic plan upon the arrival of chancellor Dan Jones in 2010. The purpose of the plan was to serve as a guide

to get the University to where it desires to be in the year 2020. The strategic plan created was *UM 2020*, and serves as a "living" document to be adaptable and meet the diverse and flexible requirements of the University of Mississippi.

UM 2020 is detailed enough to evidence the University's strong intention to "inspire a collaborative and innovative approach to planning that will advance the transformation of our University in the future, but it is not meticulous to the point that it encroaches on the important operational decisions of the school leaders like that of the chancellor, department heads or other administrators" (*UM 2020* 3). The plan was created under the supervision of Provost Morris Stocks, the Strategic Planning Council, and the Office of Strategic Planning. The planning process for the strategic plan consisted of 6 phases and led to the formation of a framework for the plan containing the commitments and goals of the University. This strategic plan contains the goals and strategies for function and infrastructure for the institution rather than any physical plans; those are contained within the Master plan for the University which will be addressed in the next section.

The goals and vision of the University contained in *UM 2020* center around the core values of the institution as well as other aspects of its identity such as the University of Mississippi Creed. These goals reflect the attitude of UM and its administration which is important in any understanding of the institution. The plan begins with three "Flagship Goals" of a general nature of success for the University such as "provide an unrivaled undergraduate experience." But the plan goes on to develop much more specific strategies of varying levels of priority. These are the main aspect of the plan and are the most essential to understand when viewing the characteristics of the plan that the

University deems the more significant. It is in these goals where the attitude of the University is discernable, particularly with regard to its relationship with the City of Oxford.

The collaborative goals of *UM 2020* are in line with mention of increased collaboration and communication between UM and Oxford by Ian Banner in an interview. He also mentioned that historically there was not much of this between the two, but this is changing as they realize that their actions have large impacts on one another (Banner 2016). As seen in the "Flagship Goals" of the strategic plan, collaboration related to Oxford has been explicitly mentioned as a core component to the University's plans, which reflects the change from private interests to more collective ideas.

The expressed priorities of the University refer to the City of Oxford and a desire to escalate the collaborative relationship with the City that will allow the University to reach its goals and prosper. Under the flagship goal of "Provide an unrivaled collegiate experience," the University seeks to "Nurture and strengthen the collaborations between the University and the Oxford-Lafayette community" (10). Inclusion of this strategy under the heading of an "unrivaled collegiate experience" is itself an acknowledgement by the University of the important role that Oxford plays in the experiences of students. The desire to enhance collaboration between the University and the larger community suggests that the UM knows how essential the City of Oxford is to the college experience which is at the heart of the University of Mississippi's identity. The plan notes the University's "picturesque, small-town setting of the main campus to the unique experiences and sense of community built around them" as having a great effect on the

students and their connection to the school even after graduation (15). The plan goes on to unambiguously refer to Oxford as a crucial part of achieving its goals for a profound experience for students as the size of the institution increases: "As the University grows, it must preserve its strong sense of community while welcoming more students. It needs to extend the special opportunities found on our campus and in Oxford to its increasingly diverse student body so that those students, too, can create 'fond memories.'" (15).

The priority of these strategies indicated in the plan give a notion of the value that the University imposes on its affiliation with Oxford. For the "University-wide strategies/tactics for success" for achieving the goals of the University regarding the collegiate experience, under the priority "Immediate (Current–2-Year) Strategies/Tactics" with the heading "Foster an environment that promotes the health, safety, and personal growth of students, faculty, and staff," the plan calls to "protect the Ole Miss experience" by establishing a task force to study the growth of enrollment and the Oxford campus "To ensure enrollment does not outstrip access to academic support resources or our physical facilities and supporting infrastructure (16). Implementation of this strategy would be an effort by the University in line with reducing potential burden put on Oxford and better preserving the collegiate experience for its students. It is not clear as to whether there would be members of the Oxford community or leadership included in this task force, though this seems possible as it is related to 'strengthen collaborative efforts with the Oxford community' (*UM 2020* 10). The duties of this task force which include preparing enrollment goals, studying the student body and student population, conducting scenario analysis for growth, and finally addressing the Campus Master Plan to "more accurately reflect the current campus environment, including the increase in student enrollment and

the University's commitment to sustainability and green initiatives" (*UM* 16).

Development of the updated Campus Master plan is currently underway and is scheduled

to be completed spring of 2016 according to Ian Banner. While this task force is not

stated as being a collaboration with the city, it certainly has duties and implications that

would have a positive impact on Oxford and make for optimistic relations whether the

city is directly included or not.

A final point of discussion for *UM 2020* is the last goal of the University that

relates directly to Oxford. An "Immediate (Current–2-Year) Strategies/Tactics" under

the heading "Promote broad cultural awareness by weaving academic, civic, and global

engagement into more aspects of student life," the plan mentions an increase of funding

for programs and registered student organizations that are popular. This is intended to

serve as another late-night entertainment option to the Oxford Square and an alternative

to drinking for underage students. This point also calls to "promote the humanities,

partnerships with the surrounding community, and civic engagement," and could be

reference to more entertainment on-campus that could be available to the Oxford

community and increase the hospitality between the two entities by also limiting negative

social impacts of students on members of the community around the Square. Parts of this

section continually reference efforts of "civil" and "community engagement" which

never refer to Oxford specifically, but could certainly be applied to the City of Oxford

and surrounding area (23-24). There is considerable vagueness in this section where

certain aspects of the plan could be referring to the City of Oxford, but it is never

explicitly stated which can be an observable weakness in town-gown relations.

Though distinctly stated very little, *UM 2020* contains references to efforts and collaborations that would increase the University's relationship with Oxford. These include an overall aspect of the Flagship goal to "Nurture and strengthen the collaborations between the University and the Oxford-Lafayette community" (10). Such dialogue in a document containing the core values, goals, and strategies for the University of Mississippi is revealing of the institution's motives for the future. The rhetoric of collaborative efforts is also echoed in Oxford's *Vision 2037*, which reflects a positive trend for the town-gown relations of Oxford and UM. That being said, there seems to be a disconnect in the amount of collaborative rhetoric between the two documents. *Vision 2037* is much more reflective of collaboration in its language than *UM 2020*. This could merely be the result of the former being much more recently completed than the latter and thus, reflecting an increase in collaborative attitude from years past; however, this could also reflect the nature of the relationship where UM does not have to account for the city as much as the City must account for the college. The physical planning of the University also has relevance in this discussion.

C.   The University of Mississippi *Campus Master Plan 2009*

The 2009 Campus Master Plan is the most recent form of the University's plan for physical development. It is limited in portrayal of more contemporary ideals and plans of the University due to the change that has occurred since 2009, both with respect to size and considerations of the University. The next iteration of a master plan is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed in the late spring of 2016. As such, personal interviews were used to gather up-to-date information. Input from the Director of Facilities Planning and University Architect, Dr. Ian Banner, was used to identify some

of the relevant aspects of this plan as well as general information regarding the future of University land use. A focal point of Dr. Banner's interview was that the University and the City of Oxford have predominantly kept to their own interests, with no large amounts of collaboration, but there is recent change in this dynamic since the University and Oxford have realized that they do not exist in a vacuum and that the decisions of one have a direct impact on the other, and as a result have considerably increased their interaction in the planning exercise (Banner 2015). Analysis of this plan, and Dr. Banner's input, is valuable to determine the levels to which the University deals with the growth that has occurred even since 2009, and how it reflects the relationship with the City of Oxford.

As with *UM* 2020, it is again noteworthy to mention the limited extent to which the University Master Plan references the City of Oxford. The *Campus Plan* refers to the 'Oxford campus' more often than it refers to the City of Oxford itself, though it does include a few references to the "broader community," which may be reference to the city. This, again, is compared to the many times that *Vision 2037* mentions the University not only by name, but also in detail. While mere reference by one institution of the other in its planning document is not dispositive of the relationship, it is obvious that, in describing the future, Oxford seems more focused on UM than *vice versa*.

The *Campus Master Plan* begins with an introduction to its goals that give an idea of the direction of the planning. One goal is to "Enhance Campus Life," where the plan directly addresses the City of Oxford in its relationship to the University:

> The Ole Miss campus not only serves as the setting for collegiate life, but it is
> also an important place in local, State and regional culture. It is intertwined with

the identity of the local Oxford community, providing a broader context for social

life in places such as the Town Square. The Master Plan addresses the important

relationship between the campus and its host community through the

improvement of physical linkages between the campus and the community. (6)

There is a strong sense of the willingness of the University to acknowledge the

importance of its host city to its identity, and outright mentions the important relationship

between town and gown upon which the plan intends to improve. The plan's statement to

improve these connections with Oxford is a very strong indicator of the priorities of the

University to expand on its connection with the City of Oxford. In fact, the plan reports

gaining input and having work sessions with both University and community

representatives during the yearlong planning process for the *Campus Master Plan* (10).

The master plan has multiple instances that seem to desire a more collaborative

planning relationship with the City of Oxford. Further evidence of a broader relationship

with the city comes from the section of the plan relating to the University's efforts at

sustainability, with the principles of "Natural Systems and Habitats, Water Resources,

Energy and Atmosphere, Integrated Transportation and Community." While a number of

these would logically include Oxford simply by association since the water sources and

environment are shared, it is the Community aspect that is most appropriate. The plan

calls to, "Promote a sense of community within the campus and in the surrounding

context to address the social dimension of sustainability" (125). This seems to reference

a community larger than just the University as being important actor in sustainable social

interactions. Though more explicitly, the document calls for the creation of a "Facilities

Planning Committee," which "may also periodically call for representation from the

broader community and/or specific campus constituencies as needed regarding specific projects or proposals" (*Campus Master Plan* 146). This suggests involvement from local individuals in a committee that would be directly responsible for the implementation of the master plan as it is a living document and would be a serious effort of city input on University matters, particularly if official representatives of the city were involved beyond just community members.

Chapter III: Transportation, Parking, and Centralization

Having just reviewed, generally, each of the three main planning documents of Oxford and UM, it is now important to compare and contrast them and to analyze what they reflect about the future of the town-gown relationship with respect to the common problems experienced in these relationships.

Transportation and parking is one of the most common problems present in town-gown relationships. Universities are less centralized and residential today than they were in the past. More frequently, students must commute to campus from their off-campus residences. This is usually manifested in higher numbers of parking lots and campus accessibility devoted to vehicles and the traffic they create, both on campus and in the greater area. It is this aspect of modern colleges and universities that results in trouble for both the institution and the town as negative effects arise from parking and accessibility. John Sibley mentions these negative effects in his document referenced in *Town and Gown Relations*:

> [T]here is hardly a college campus in the country that does not have parking problems. In a small community, these problems overflow into the neighborhoods near campus. The high number of student-owned vehicles can overtax the community's municipal lots, and create parking problems within a community's central business district. (132)

In particular, a report by Elizabeth Isler and Lester Hoel for the Center for Transportation Studies at UVa confirms, "the areas in which this cooperation is most needed are safety

and circulation conflicts (e.g. busy local roads that transverse the campus) and spillover parking" (95). This is a shared problem for campuses and college towns resulting in a high degree of vehicle-pedestrian conflicts which compromise safety and time (Isler and Hoel 94). While these problems do exist in Oxford and the University, they are handled relatively well by both the city and University due to similar strategies outlined in their land-use plans, successful collaborative effort, and great potential for further cooperation. This makes the parking and transportation facet a relatively positive aspect of the Oxford-UM town-gown relationship.

Oxford and the University of Mississippi's growth have had implications on the levels of traffic in both the town and on campus. Oxford has constructed roads and a few notable intersection changes to accommodate the increase of traffic as well as the implementation of parking meters on the Square. The University has added roads of its own together with various parking lots both on and around the edge of campus, including a centrally located parking garage, to accommodate its increase in vehicle load. There is also the significant cooperation that already exists related to game day parking and transportation systems in Oxford. For UM football games, busses and shuttles function to bring visitors back and forth between lots around Oxford and the campus. There is an extensive partnership effort and cooperation between the entities on the matter of game day alone which provides shared expenses as well as benefits. Another example of their collaboration is in the joint O.U.T. bus program, in which Oxford and UM have a matching share, that serves both the University and the Oxford community. This program has been very successful since its implementation and is a benchmark for collaboration between the town and gown.

Oxford and the University have addressed parking and transportation issues both in the case of effective collaborative efforts and their concentration on the issue in their documents related to future land use and planning. In fact, the strategies and goals contained within their planning documents, and spoken of by officials, related to transportation are remarkably similar. There are already plans visible in previous documents that reflect Oxford and the University's very similar efforts to minimize the effect that traffic and parking have on both the city and the campus. These efforts include the similar priorities of Oxford in *Vision 2037* and the University in the *Campus Master Plan* to centralize and improve pedestrian experience and accessibility by decreasing the role of cars and increasing the potential for alternate forms of transportation.

This is reflective of the plans and examples of the proposed form-based code in *Vision 2037*, and reinforced by Andrea Correll, which seeks to eliminate large parking lots as the focus and center-point of developments in Oxford; and, instead aims to develop future mixed-use storefronts against the main roadways around the perimeters of the property with parking lots to the center, thus emphasizing the pedestrian as the focal point while encouraging less driving.

Vision 2037 uses the strip shopping center on North Lamar Blvd., a center with a number of popular stores and restaurants just north of the popular Oxford Square, as a hypothetical, but foreseeable, scenario of the potential implementation of the form-based code use in one of Oxford's existing developments. This proposed example for implementation of the new form-based code focuses on a partial redevelopment scenario within the shopping center on North Lamar. This redevelopment example would fall into

the place type of Urban Center (fig. 1-1). Under the plan, any new buildings along N. Lamar must be mixed-use building to increase efficient use of the space to be visually appealing and good for pedestrian focus to the storefronts. The center of the shopping center must be left open for parking which would not be visible from the main Boulevard. The plan also calls for improvements to the roadway and sensible connections from the roads to the development to make the flow of traffic more efficient; this includes implementation of a traffic circle at the nearby intersection.

Another scenario for the N. Lamar shopping center is large-scale redevelopment of the area according to the principal considerations of the plan as a whole, using the form-based code (fig. 1-2). This version would make the shopping center into a complete urban center, including residences such as townhomes and an overall more dense mixed-use development, with tuck-under parking as the primary method of accommodating vehicles.

Oxford would also increase the role of bicycles around the city through enhanced bikeways and bike lanes across roadways of most Place Types to further reduce vehicle traffic and enhancing non-vehicular mobility (*Vision* 2037). This very similar concept is echoed by plans of the University that are mentioned from all UM sources (*UM 2020,* the *Campus Master Plan 2009*, as well as Ian Banner) relating to a focus on reduction in the number of vehicles on campus both for traffic and parking to increase the pedestrian experience.

DETAILED DESIGN

This scenario illustrates partial redevelopment of an existing strip shopping center along North Lamar into an Urban Center. In this scenario, the majority of existing buildings remain, but this limits the density of new development due to site and parking constraints. New development is sited close to North Lamar to promote a pedestrian-friendly node of activity along the street and near the intersection of North Lamar and Price Street. Existing buildings to remain must be well-connected to N. Lamar via a secondary sidewalk system.

① Curb cuts should be consolidated into as few access points as possible and located away from existing streets.

② Existing parking should be hidden from view of all primary streets.

③ New parking areas should be located to the rear of structures and accessed from side streets when possible.

④ Improvements to N. Lamar should include wide sidewalks (12 ft. minimum), street trees, and on-street parking to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

⑤ Existing buildings to remain should be connected to primary streets via a secondary sidewalk system within the site.

⑥ New development should be built close to the street and include shop front frontage at street level to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

⑦ Space between existing buildings and streets should be designed as outdoor dining or open space to avoid vehicles being placed between the building and the street.

⑧ Take advantage of changes in topography to incorporate features such as tuck-under parking.

⑨ Where vehicular connections are not possible, encourage pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent development.

DETAILED DESIGN • N. LAMAR URBAN CENTER 'A'
PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

Fig. 1-1. Detailed Design, N. Lamar Urban Center 'A', Partial Redevelopment from Oxford Planning Dept. *Vision 2037*. Review Draft Rev. 2. Pg. 83.

DETAILED DESIGN

This scenario illustrates a large-scale redevelopment of an existing strip shopping center along North Lamar into an Urban Center. This scenario utilizes the change in topography from North Lamar to the back of the site to create a large amount of tuck-under parking. This allows for a greater density and mixture of uses on the site as a whole. A U-shaped street connects the interior of the site to North Lamar and creates a block structure within the site. New development is built close to North Lamar and internal streets with shop frontage at street level and residential and/or office above.

① Curb cuts should be consolidated into as few access points as possible and located away from existing streets.

② Where topography permits, tuck-under parking should be utilized to maximize density within the site.

③ Improvements to North Lamar should include wide sidewalks (12 ft. minimum), street trees, and on-street parking to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

④ New development should be built close to the street and include shop frontage at street level to foster a pedestrian-friendly environment.

⑤ Medium density residential, such as townhouses, create a transition to adjacent development.

⑥ Usable open space in the form of plazas, squares, and greens should be incorporated into Urban Centers when possible.

DETAILED DESIGN • N. LAMAR URBAN CENTER 'B'
LARGE-SCALE REDEVELOPMENT

Fig. 1-2. Detailed Design, N. Lamar Urban Center 'B', Large-scale Redevelopment from Oxford Planning Dept. *Vision 2037*. Review Draft Rev. 2. Pg. 84.

The future plans of the University of Mississippi in *UM 2020, Campus Master Plan*, and input from Ian Banner complement the concern for better handling of vehicular traffic and parking in order to create a pedestrian focus on campus. *UM 2020*, under the heading of "Foster an environment…," mentions an effort by the University that will apply equally to Oxford and is related to physical developments. The plan calls to serve both the University and the city alike through construction of a recreational facility with outdoor spaces for various sports that aims to "promote and better accommodate biking, walking, and riding buses; and increase connections with the LOU Pathways Commission and Oxford's parks and trails" (16). This aspect of the plan follows with the similar ideas of the city and *Vision 2037* to maintain a stronger network of accessibility in the city and university for pedestrians and cyclists, thus reducing traffic created by vehicles. This also provides the City of Oxford with more recreational availability to be utilized by members of the community. Plans to improve the connectivity of the facility coincide with the successful practice of universities mentioned by John Sibley that, "providing strong connections within and around the campus and its edges to promote walking, bicycling and transit use, rather than vehicular traffic," serve to decrease sources of conflict (Sibley 133).

The *Campus Master Plan* reinforces these transportation goals and aims to centralize the campus for a greater pedestrian focus and elimination of congestion that would infringe on the campus experience. Efforts to accomplish this are removal of traffic and large parking lots from the main areas of campus to create a better walking and biking environment: "The Master Plan circulation system eliminates redundant roads, simplifies vehicular circulation, and removes traffic from the campus core to improve the

pedestrian experience" (*Campus Master Plan* 29). Along these same lines are statements

regarding a greater connection to bike routes in the Oxford area, which are more recently

reflective of the earlier statements from *UM 2020* on connections for the campus

additions (*Campus Master Plan* 48).

Just like Oxford, the University plans to shift from a more vehicular-centric

development to an approach that no longer places parking lots and traffic as the focus.

There will be closings of some roads and new developments at the core of the campus to

enhance campus life and create a more functional and appealing university center for

pedestrians. These areas are designated as "Pedestrian Priority Zones," and are already

visible on campus with the closing of Student Union Dr. (*Campus Master Plan* 46). As

referenced earlier, there are University plans to connect further with Oxford's existing

bike routes to create a campus bicycle network to improve transportation on campus

while avoiding conflict with cars or pedestrians (*Campus Master Plan* 48). Efforts to

reduce these effects of vehicles by the University are directly reflective of Oxford's

similar focus on the pedestrian experience, thus providing the two entities with common

ideals, which could be united into a joint land use plan.

Ian Banner noted the increased interest in preserving the identity of the campus

even in the face of growth and creating a more centralized and pedestrian-focused

campus. There are to be increased connections to the community that will lessen the

impact of vehicles and traffic on campus and promote greater accessibility on foot and by

bicycle (Banner 2015). This is already reflected in the use of park and ride on campus

and the creation of the O.U.T. bus network mentioned earlier, in which the University

and Oxford have a matching local share with the University subsidizing student, faculty,

and staff ridership as reported by superintendent of the program, Ron Biggs (Biggs 2016). Ian Banner noted that there would not be a creation of a large "Center for Innovation Excellence" as depicted in the 2009 *Campus Master Plan* because of an interest in preserving the green areas of Oxford, notably the Thacker Mountain trails that run through the area and are greatly utilized by runners, cyclists, and hikers alike (Banner 2015). Instead, the old Whirlpool plant is to be turned into an outdoor recreation center which would provide more sports fields for students and members of the community alike, along with serving as a large hub for bus transportation (Banner 2015). This serves to preserve the greater area of Oxford, including perhaps one of the most utilized outdoor recreation trail networks in all of Oxford.

The collaborative efforts between Oxford and UM have had positive impacts in their own right which help to diminish issues correlated with transportation and parking. Beyond what is planned and reflective of success in addressing transportation issues in University and Oxford documents of future use, the O.U.T. Bus system provides an example of a current success of the Oxford-UM related to this common issue. This system provides a valuable service for the university and the community and functions furthermore for UM to shuttle those who park & ride, thus also aiding in parking issue mitigation as well as lessening traffic. *UM 2020*'s goal, covered in chapter 1, to establish an outdoor facility with various connections to Oxford pathways was reinforced by Ian Banner to be the redevelopment of the Whirlpool facility mentioned earlier. He further reported this would also serve as a large station for bus transportation system, such as O.U.T. busses, which would further extend the collaboration success between Oxford and UM on the topic of transportation and parking (Banner 2015). A similar program of a

jointly funded bus system between the town and the university exists on the campus of

UVa and in the town of Charlottesville which is a symbol of the collaborative effort

between the two entities and has been credited with improving the relations between

towns people and students, a relationship previously fraught with animosity as the two

would rarely associate (Clemons 59). This type of transportation system with an

intermodal transportation center, such as the one to be created by the University, that

creates connections between the University and the city is also noted by James Martin

and James Samels in their study of colleges around Boston to be a staple of successful

contemporary college towns (50).

Of course there are still areas of this relationship between Oxford and the

University of Mississippi upon which there could be improvement, as there remain other

issues that may still need to be addressed such as the issue of parking overflow. As UM

and the state do not provide Oxford with enrollment projections or have plans to limit

enrollment at a certain point according to *Vision 2037*, parking overflow due to a high

number of vehicles on campus could increase. This issue of parking overflow can be

visible in the areas of campus closest to the Square, like the parking lot of the Ford

Center. This lot has daily overflow that stretches up into the neighborhood area of Van

Buren St. and along the base of Depot St. This excess of parking is also impactful to

Tyler Ave. and S 5th St. adjacent to St. John Catholic Church. While this is not a severe

issue that causes extensive ramifications, it is an example of the problems that still

remain related to parking and transportation. There are plans contained in the *Campus

Master Plan* for the construction of more parking and parking garages along the

periphery of the campus which will be connected to the pedestrian network and reduce

demand for parking and vehicles at the campus core (40). Until these objectives are completed, and if enrollment does continue to increase, there will remain to be problems of parking on campus that may affect Oxford, especially during the construction of these areas due to the effect of construction on traffic.

Overall, relationship between Oxford and the University of Mississippi is successful with respect to land use of transportation and parking due to their mutual efforts in regard to the O.U.T. bus as well as their individual future plans related to centralization and addressing traffic congestion and parking individually. There is still room in the relationship for greater collaboration in these efforts. Strategies to improve this relationship between Oxford and the University of Mississippi can occur primarily through increased levels of communication leading to cooperation and the curbing of these issues before they become to difficult to manage (Sibley 132). In fact, cooperation is noted in the study conducted by Isler and Hoel as, "The greatest opportunity for campuses to manage their transportation and land use systems appears to be better town-gown cooperation…the co-existence of these entities requires that they co-plan and comanage [*sic*] the physical area that they share" (95). Oxford and the University seem to adequately deal with these issues on an individual basis, but should form a formal partnership in the form of a joint committee on the matters of land use and parking in particular to ensure they are addressed to mutual satisfaction of the city and University.

Chapter IV: Housing

The housing and residential aspect of town-gown relationships is one of the most affected by instances of growth and has a number of greater influences on both entities, which have much to do with land use and even some socio-economic implications. The City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi are no different when it comes to the impact of this subject of town-gown relations; in fact, the residential aspect of this relationship is the most important one to consider in the case of Oxford and UM as it is the weakest feature of their relationship. Awareness of these common issues creates a greater understanding of their impact on town-gown relations and gives a better impression of the ways in which one must study, and therefore address, these issues.

Relating primarily to land use, this subject relies on proper communication and cooperation between the city or town and the college or university since both have a finite amount of space available for development and have differing priorities and considerations to which they must adhere. As universities develop their land with student housing, they begin to fill in the space and must look to off-campus properties to fulfill their needs (Sungu-Eryilmaz 13). Therefore, the city or town is often left with the burden of supplying the housing needs of university students and faculty in addition to those of the local residents.

Here arises one issue, as the housing needs of the university and the housing needs of the city are rarely in-sync and are often conflicting. Complications can often arise related to this conflict, including the trend that an increase of off-campus housing

that is purpose-built for students is often expensive and unavailable or affordable as rental housing for residents. The increased need for student housing may also result in gentrification (or "studentification") as lower income neighborhoods are re-purposed as sites for higher-priced student housing development. This was the case for a mobile home community in Athens, Georgia (Pickren 113). The occurrence of student housing development off-campus is the primary matter in the residential aspect of these relationships and can go on to cause other problems affecting the overall relationship between town and gown.

With the University of Mississippi experiencing the tremendous growth in enrollment, there is a higher demand for housing of the student population, but limited space on campus for new student housing. In addition, the University desires to limit student housing developments on campus. UM views the campus as an integral part of the University's identity and appeal for attracting the best and brightest students which would be negatively affected by large housing developments that would congest the campus, destroying some of its beauty and character (*Vision* 22). The idea is substantiated by the interview with Ian Banner who also emphasizes the increased interest of the University to preserve the identity of the campus itself, even in the face of growth (Banner 2015). Similarly, the construction and operation of more on-campus housing would be a cost to the State that it may not be in position to undertake. Because the University is not investing in sufficient student housing, burden to fulfill the residual needs is pushed to the City.

This demand for student housing puts an encumbrance on the City of Oxford that has a number of negative implications in-line with those common in town-gown

relations. *Vision 2037* defines the role of the housing status in Oxford as "exceptionally critical," with the University of Mississippi's increase in enrollment fueling the demand in Oxford for housing of students that must move off-campus due to limited on-campus housing or the preferences of the students (14). This leads developers in Oxford to focus primarily on purpose-built housing for students, zoned as multi-family with various density levels. The issue of this student housing exposes a weakness in the relationship between Oxford and the University evident from a lack of communication with regard to their future growth that makes the job of supplying this housing more difficult for the City of Oxford.

With the unprecedented growth of the University, *Vision 2037* recognizes the impact of the student housing issue on the City of Oxford as it attempts to meet demand not covered by on-campus housing. The student population in Oxford was noted by the plan from U.S. Census bureau data refined with data collected in the 2013 Community Survey, as well as with input from the University. Data show the student population to be 12,400 full-time college students in Lafayette County in 2013 (10,400 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate), with the 4,200 on-campus students counted separately for a total of 16,600 (*Vision* 21). It is difficult for Oxford to deal with the student growth and housing demand because the State and the University do not put controls on enrollment growth or generate enrollment projections. Oxford's ability to plan for future growth is limited without this input from the University as the housing capacities for students cannot be fully or confidently determined.

UM continues to bring more students despite an overall decline in incoming freshman at other schools nationwide. This dearth of information from the University

exposes a lack of cooperative effort between the two entities that makes the job of Oxford to plan for and permit the appropriate number of student housing projects problematic.

Oxford, through *Vision 2037*, developed two growth scenarios for the student population. A high-growth scenario, which assumes growth at the current pace, and a moderate-growth scenario, which assumes continued growth at about 1/3 the rate of the high-growth scenario (*Vision* 21). "The High-Growth scenario yields demand for 3,040 student beds, including 340 purpose-built units, by 2020. The Moderate-Growth scenario generates demand for 1,620 beds including 130 purpose-built units by 2020" (*Vision* 21). With input from the University, *Vision 2037* claims that UM will supply 930 beds and developers have planned 870 beds for a total of 1,800 beds in the planning pipeline for 2020 (22). According to the plan, projects already in the pipeline would not satisfy the demand created in the high-growth scenario with a remaining 1,240 student beds beyond what is planned, and the moderate-growth scenario would result in an over supply of 180 beds. One of the main contributors to this growth dilemma for Oxford is the relatively sparse increase in capacity supplied by the University as it tries to maintain the character of its campus by limiting crowding of residence halls. This results in developers coming in to supply the housing needed by the increasing student population that, in turn, has driven prices of land and construction costs up as the demand increases. These actions send ripple effects through the housing market with adverse impacts on the affordable housing market in particular.

Affordable housing for residents (families) has become limited as there is more focus toward students and purpose-built student housing. The result is a deficit of affordable housing in Oxford. This need for more affordable housing is exacerbated by

the economic trends of employment in Oxford which are addressed in the next chapter.

Vision 2037 states that, "The impacts of development pressures on the housing market may have contributed to the rising cost of construction and reduced affordability to the housing consumer. Rising costs, coupled with a shift in the local economy towards more low-wage service jobs, exacerbates issues with the availability of affordable housing" (23). The plan reports a need for about 600 affordable units to be priced 15% below the price of housing planned in the developing areas, but the prices of the planned housing to be for sale in the area would not likely be viable options based on area incomes (*Vision* 22). This reflects similar problems for Oxford and the University that are present in other town-gown relations related to a lack of affordable housing.

Similarly, the threat of gentrification, as seen in Athens, Georgia, from Graham Pickren's article, is possible in Oxford as more student housing development is needed in the high-growth scenario, particularly since there are multiple low-income locations, like mobile-home parks, in Oxford that exist in desirable locations for student housing. Efforts by the two entities to communicate and better plan for student housing can resolve these issues and decrease potential friction for the Oxford – University relationship.

There are also social effects of off-campus housing which can be reflected in community members' antipathy toward having student housing developments near them. A common perception is that the presence of student housing may affect the character of their neighborhoods, even when the presence of students is in existing rental properties in the neighborhoods (Sungu-Eryilmaz 19). John W. Sibley, City Manager of the City of Orange, noted in his document, *Town and Gown Relations*, that every college town has a high number of students that live and desire to live in off-campus housing as rental

property, whether the residence halls are full or not. He notes that, "Habits and hours of college students are often different from the neighborhood in which they reside, and this can become a concern for neighborhood residents" (132). This difference in activity between students in neighborhoods and members of the community is mostly due to the social activities of students and the involvement of alcohol which is noted by Rebecca Mahoney in her article *Traversing the Town Gown Challenge*. She observes, "few challenges strain the town gown relationship like student conduct—especially when it involves underage drinking" (Mahoney 34). She references particular examples of student conduct being an issue between residents of Keene, New Hampshire and Keene State College in neighborhood settings.

For Oxford and the University of Mississippi, there is a relatively good relationship in regard to the social implications of student housing due to the absence of some frictions that occur in other college towns. Purpose built student housing in Oxford is often contained and removed from general community populations, which minimizes the social conflicts between students and the community. However, conflicts do arise when students live in traditional neighborhood communities, especially around the Square. Friction related to these communities comes from the social behaviors of students in rental properties including parties and the noise level of those walking late at night from the Square. Social disputes in the these communities on the Square can also be observed through the recent ordinances against extensive parking on the street and in the yards and also those regarding the presence of chairs on the roofs of houses of houses located around the Square (Ord. No. 2015-19, § II.4, 5-5-2015 and Ord. No. 2015-19, § III.8, 5-5-2015). The Oxford Square is the social center and attraction of the town and,

therefore, is to have its character preserved through these ordinances. Greater collaboration between Oxford and the University in the form of a joint committee on student behavior in the community could benefit this aspect of the residential nature of the town-gown relation of Oxford and UM.

Vision 2037 also recommends the mixed-use developments, including student housing, that adhere to the guiding principles of the plan and the form-based code be located at the interface between the University and Oxford. Such recommendations for these are the old hospital site and areas west of the University along commercial corridors that would benefit from mixed-use rather than isolated residential areas. Another important aspect of these mixed-use student developments would include ground-floor retail to keep the area pedestrian-focused and in-line with smart growth principles.

The University may provide some mixed-use housing that Oxford suggests. *UM 2020* and Ian Banner suggest that the development of the Whirlpool facility area will also include the future site of any additional Greek housing that comes to the University. This would serve to provide additional student housing for which Oxford would not be responsible, thereby lessening the burden.

The residential aspects of the town-gown dynamic in the relationship between the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi are a very crucial aspect of their relations. The growth of the University of Mississippi has been substantial and may continue to increase since there are no limits put on enrollment by the University or the State. As such, this growth has dramatically impacted the housing market in Oxford as the University's lack of space on campus puts the burden of supply for student housing on the city. This has caused difficulty for the city to deal with this growth, as it has had

to create growth scenarios with a significant amount of grey area. The inconsistency of the growth scenarios where the high-growth scenario will not provide enough housing and the moderate-growth scenario will provide too much reflects a deficiency of communication between the two entities. The only clear cooperation on the matter is that the University provided information to Oxford about how much housing the University has in the planning pipeline.

Based on the documents reviewed, the University does not include much regarding cooperation with Oxford on student housing, but Oxford includes a number of references to collaboration with the University. Overall, *Vision 2037* notes the importance of collaborative efforts particularly in the realm of housing:

> Ultimately, it is in both the City's and the University's best interests to work together to ensure understanding of likely demographic and enrollment growth, and assign student housing to locations and as part of mixed-use developments that are less likely to impact neighborhoods negatively (23).

If the University were to reciprocate this language of cooperation that Oxford portrays in *Vision 2037* there could be much more symbiotic relationship in residential matters of this local town-gown relationship. Strategies and policies exist that Oxford and UM could pursue to reduce potential conflict and ease friction created from the common town-gown issue of housing.

Strategies for success in handling residential aspects of town-gown relations that could most appropriately be applied to the relationship of Oxford and the University of Mississippi can be implemented to reduce possible friction and improve the relationship. Effective strategies would revolve around an increase collaboration related to housing,

such as a joint planning effort that includes housing. A lack of cooperative rhetoric in University of Mississippi plans and goals is even more apparent when compared to the substantial volume of language that Oxford includes in *Vision 2037* related to a need for cooperation between the city and university, especially related to housing. An increase of formal policies and collaborative language in documents and policies results in more communication between the two entities that would be especially suited to the issues of housing in the Oxford-UM relationship; these include a lack of input from the University on housing which leads to inefficient information for Oxford to plan housing properly, as evident in the growth scenarios that result in either too much or too little housing.

However, Ian Banner and Andrea Correll indicate greater communication and collaboration between the University and the City of Oxford in the future which would have significant benefit to the residential aspects of their relationship. This communication could come in the form of strategies like a mutual land use plan related to housing or a joint committee with members of both the University and Oxford to address housing issues. John Sibley notes a number of practices for success in town-gown relationships in his chapter of *Best Practices…* such as, "Strongly encouraging private developers to provide a variety of housing types that target both current and future needs of the overall community and campus" (133). This would serve to eliminate the bias in the market for student housing and would create the necessary affordable housing needed in Oxford. Implementation of these practices and strategies could greatly diminish negative aspects of Oxford-UM relationships associated with housing and other residential effects.

Chapter V: Economic Development

It is fairly evident that planning for, and managing the traffic, housing, and land use issues previously discussed can be costly. Where does the money come from and how is it allocated? This is the last major aspect of the town-gown dynamic to be discussed. The economic issues and stresses facing both the university and the host city can be a source of conflict.

Economic issues impacting the relationship between a college and its host city are as broad as the overall economic footprint of the university, including the tax status of the institution. The financial burden on a college town, exacerbated by this issue of the tax-exempt status of a college or university, frequently has larger implications in town-gown relationships. These implications can be severe, and go on to negatively affect important land use practices such as those discussed in the previous chapters.

Does the school pay taxes to the town or is it exempt? Does it make payments to the town for services or provide financial support another way, such as in the form of gifts? These economic hot buttons arise in college towns despite the incredible boost to local economies that institutions of higher learning typically provide. In fact, the overall boost to the economy may do little to remedy the fiscal burdens when the municipality is in need of revenue. Dr. Sungu-Eryilmaz notes that even with the economic contributions that colleges and universities bring to cities, "their tax-exempt status is a growing concern for some governments, especially when institutional expansion represents a loss of potential property tax revenue" (21). This dynamic can give rise to serious opposition

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from the city or town to the growth of a university. It may even give rise to disdain for the school when the economic burden is exacerbated by the fact that the institution adds an additional burden on the infrastructure of the city, all while not paying taxes to remedy these problems.

An example of this situation is evident in the relationship between the city of Boston and Northeastern University, as reported by Martin and Samels in their article reprinted in *Town and Gown Relations* by Kemp:

> Over time, however, the proliferation of tax-exempt campuses, occupying choice properties and drawing heavily on police, fire, and emergency medical services, sowed seeds of discontent in town/ gown relationships. Cities and towns justifiably expected pilot payments (payment in lieu of taxes), a reasonable contribution for municipal services in lieu of tax revenues. (48)

In their analysis, they also address the occurrence of pilot programs in which universities agree to make payments to cities in the form of a "gift" or contribution for infrastructure use and to ease tensions. These programs are not always consistent and may bring on additional problems such as lawsuits. In fact, Christine Legere writes about an instance between Bridgewater and Bridgewater State University where the town grew tired of supplying the University with municipal services without getting adequate compensation. Bridgewater State owns 198 acres of the town and until recently had provided a "$50,000 annual gift," but stopped due to fiscal constraints. Officials from the town note that, "even when given, such gifts have failed to cover municipal expenses in either town for the services rendered" (Legere 52).

In the town of Easton, despite a joint committee of the city and college on the matter, Stonehill College only paid a $20,000 "gift," even though the town noted that the college property would equate to $700,000 in tax revenue if they weren't exempt (Legere 52). Disputes over this disparity in Easton eroded the relationship between the two entities actually leading to the town imposing a $55,000 fine on the college for construction without a permit, thus prompting Stonehill to file suit against the town over the fine.

Oxford and the University have largely been able to avoid these types of issues in their relationship. Their success, however, may be due simply to their existing nature rather than a deliberate practice to address these issues. While the University of Mississippi is tax-exempt as a State institution of higher learning, there exist very few, if any, public frictions between the City of Oxford and the University related to tax-exempt status. This is true even without use of pilot payments from the institution. This lack of friction despite any pilot payments may be the result of the fact that the University funds and provides many of its own services rather than burdening Oxford (Sparks 2016). The University of Mississippi vice chancellor for administration and finance, Larry Sparks, reported that the University "operate[s] our own police department, electric department, sewer department, water system, telephone system, internet system, sanitation department, public works department, and we are responsible for the creation, maintenance, and upkeep of all our streets, drives, sidewalks, and parking lots." This correlates to reduced pressure on the city's infrastructure, although the University does outsource its fire department to the City of Oxford, which the City is contractually compensated for by the University as obligated (Sparks 2016). Because the University of

Mississippi pays for almost all of its own services, its tax-exempt status is less of a point of confliction than in many other town-gown relations.

As mentioned, the favorable economic impact of universities on their host municipality can be substantial. For instance, the University of Virginia student population supplied $211.9 million in fiscal revenue for Charlottesville in 2005 along with $122.1 million from visitors to the town brought by the University. Additionally, the taxable real estate owned or rented by faculty, staff and students in Charlottesville and Albemarle County was valued at $3.3 billion in 2005 and yielded $ 28.3 million in property tax revenues (Clemmons 59-60). Another example is in Durham, New Hampshire, with the University of New Hampshire (UNH) being the number one employer in the area while also operating a few of its own services. For example, UNH operates its own police force, as to lessen its economic burden on the city (Mahoney 32). Both UNH and Durham, as well as Keene State College (KSC) and the city of Keene, have cooperative relationships leading to financial agreements between the town and gown serving to minimize the impact of the school's tax-exempt status.

The economic significance of the University of Mississippi to Oxford is perhaps one of the most extensive of all the studied town-gown relations mentioned in this work. The economic implications of the University of Mississippi on the City of Oxford are addressed by *Vision 2037* in numerous ways. The document notes that the University provides a significant portion of the jobs in Oxford, with Education accounting for more than 20% of the county's direct employment and one of the largest increase in jobs was in the accommodation and food services (restaurants and hotels), which account for 15% of all jobs (*Vision* 14). There is a significant connection with the University as it is such a

driver in the sector due to the visitors brought to Oxford though the extensive cultural and culinary activity in the town certainly contributes as well. Economic implications are a very important role for institutions of higher learning and can serve to greatly expose the positives of strong town-gown connection. In the case of Oxford and UM, the University is noted as the key institution in the city's history and the primary factor in the economy with the number of jobs supplied by the institution; taxes and fiscal revenue gained from the student faculty and staff; property taxes from those of the University living in Oxford; and the extremely high number of visitors that the school attracts to Oxford for events such as football games and other sporting events. This equates to not only an extended boost to the economy of Oxford with outside money coming into the city, but substantial amounts of external funds coming from outside of Mississippi altogether, even from states as far away as California and the East coast.

This revenue is providing a significant secondary boost to the Mississippi economy. More than simply the higher tuition brought in to the University by the out-of-state students, their visiting families provide a boost to the overall economy of the town. Even further, the strength of both Oxford and UM as an increasingly popular destination for visitors and tourists contributes more money for the local and state economy. These characteristics of the economic relationship between the city and university clearly portray an overall strength of Oxford-UM in this regard.

Based on the evidence and analysis presented throughout this chapter, the town-gown relationship of the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi on economic issues seems very successful. The problems that plague and strain other relationships due to the tax-exempt status of the university are not experienced by Oxford-UM due mostly

to *de facto* aspects of their relationship. The University's contributions to the local economy and its limited burden placed on the municipal services of Oxford lead to a more balanced nature as the possible detriment of tax-exemption is not as problematic as it cold otherwise be and the benefit of the University over any detriment, economically, is demonstrated. This economic relationship is further enhanced by the considerable positive effect on revenue that the University brings to the economy of Oxford even without paying property taxes for its roughly 800 acres of land. The relative success in their relationship regarding economics and that of the transportation aspect are similarly successful, but differ in that there was active efforts of collaboration to produce the success related to transportation while the success of their economic relationship is mostly due to intrinsic circumstances.

While there is not much to criticize related to economics in this relationship, more purposeful collaboration between the entities could ensure beneficial relationship going forward. One example to achieve this result is action by the Mayor to incorporate university leadership in local government to advise on future economic direction "and bring to bear their considerable purchasing, employment, real estate development, business incubation, advising, and workforce development resources" (Porter and Grogan 226). Another similar option for improving the relationship further is the establishment of a university-liaison office to advance collaboration and economic development to mutually benefit both the town and gown by identifying and acting upon economic development opportunities (Porter and Grogan 227).

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The town-gown relationship of the City of Oxford, Mississippi and the Flagship—The University of Mississippi—is relatively stable. The relationship between them lacks much of the conflict, hostility, and similar frictions that occur so often in other places. This success, however, is often due merely to the intimate and cordial historic relationship between the two. Their relationship, while not exhibiting a number of the notable negative aspects, is still not exemplary due to a general deficiency in extensive, deliberate, cooperative, collaborative, and communicative efforts. If the University and Oxford strive toward more of these formal interactions, rather than being content with the status quo, the relationship would serve as a brighter example of success to other town-gown relationships since "improved channels of communication, increased coordination, and mutual cooperation are the essential actions required in ensuring a healthy Town & Gown Relationship" (Manahan 720). The intimate and historical nature of this local relationship provides the perfect setting and foundations for what could be a future of prolonged prosperity for both the town and the gown.

In labeling a weakness of the Oxford-UM relationship, one would focus on the limited amount of planned and deliberate collaboration and cooperation between the two entities. There are not many formal connections shown through joint committees or partnerships, as well as a lack of direct language and rhetoric of cooperation in the planning documents discussed earlier. This exposes a common weakness that both UM and Oxford share as words such as "partnership," "collaboration," and "engagement" in

plans and goals of the university are important in determining the strength of cooperative intentions in strong town-gown relationships (Perry 2008).

This near absence of cooperative language in the documents is particularly a weakness of the University. Its strategic plan, *UM 2020*, largely fails to acknowledge need for mutual efforts with Oxford while *Vision 2037* is rife with a desire to collaborate with the University to overcome the shortcomings of their relations. In fact, *UM 2020* mentions Oxford a mere 5 times while the University is mentioned well over 100 times in *Vision 2037*. Notably, the University is referenced over 80 times in the first 27 pages of Oxford's *Vision 2037*. This reflects in a simple, yet visible, way the level at which Oxford is accountable for the University while UM is much less so of the city, though the *Master Plan* does mention more regarding Oxford.

Despite this apparent weakness in the written plans, interviews with Ian Banner and Andrea Correll, the heads of planning for UM and Oxford, reported a current and future increase in the amount of collaboration and communication between the City and University. They both suggest they have begun to realize the benefits of cooperative efforts and their impacts on one another (Banner 2015, Correll 2015). This is also reflected in the fact that Ian Banner is acknowledged as a member of the Advisory committee for *Vision 2037*, though it is yet to be seen as to whether Andrea Correll will receive similar recognition in the upcoming Campus Master Plan. This collaborative trend is perhaps the most important aspect of the study of these future-planning documents, as it is a crucial indicator of town-gown relationships.

With the upcoming *2016 Master Campus Plan* coming from the University, it is possible that there will be much more acknowledgement of the City by the University,

and of potential for more collaborations. Both institutions have very similar interests,

especially considering their plans for centralization and increased focus on pedestrians

rather than vehicles as reflected in the form-based code in *Vision 2037* and the *Campus

Master Plan*. As mutual planning efforts between a university and a town have been

observed by Dr. Roger Kemp, an accomplished city manager and expert in town-gown

relations, to be important keys to mutual success, it could, therefore, be very beneficial

for Oxford and UM to establish a joint plan. This would be manifested in a coalescence

of officials and administrators from both the City and the University to create a plan

addressing common concerns and issues related to land use and more that is mutually

beneficial. This plan would contain compromises in order to appropriately address the

concerns and goals of both through a combination of work and resources.

Such an effort would improve communications and could improve mutual

prosperity. Certainly, conflicts and complications would be more easily circumvented.

This joint plan would be especially relevant to Oxford-UM based on the fact that both

have recently done their own plans and would have abundant research and data at their

disposal to aid in creation of a joint plan. The future collaboration mentioned by Ian

Banner and Andrea Correll show that the necessary relationship already exists in the

planning departments to undertake the effort and mention of a "Facilities Planning

Committee" from the *Campus Master Plan* reflects a present desire by the University

(146). This would be especially relevant to the problems of parking for the University

and the spillover that affects Oxford neighborhoods. Even a joint plan that is issue-

specific, such as to parking or traffic, could greatly enhance their relationship and bring

Oxford-UM into the next generation of college towns.

There are other successful efforts or "best practices" in town-gown relationships that could be utilized by Oxford and the University of Mississippi to enhance the formal relationship between the two that fortifies communication and accountability, thus improving relations and decreasing the likelihood of conflicts and friction. Examples of these "best practices" for use in the Oxford-UM relationship include increasing the formal relationship through creation of partnerships such as committees and the use of liaisons.

The most feasible and potentially successful option for improving Oxford-UM relations would be the creation of a committee such as a Joint Town-Gown Advisory Board. These entities are common in the more flourishing town-gown relations and serve as simple, yet efficient keys to success in communication and cooperation. This group would be the first step of dealing with issues and would be made up of equal numbers of University and City officials, including the law-enforcement heads from both OPD and UPD. The greatest example of success seen from one such committee is from Clemson University with its Joint City University Advisory Board (JCUAB). Clemson University and the City of Clemson are the gold standard in town-gown relationships, voted number one for town-gown relations in the country for five consecutive years by *Princeton Review*, and even founding the International Town & Gown Association (ITGA), a non-profit corporation devoted to "assist civic leaders, university officials, faculty, neighborhood residents and students to collaborate on common services, programs, academic research and citizen issues…[like] economic development, alcohol use, planning & housing, health & safety, and other common issues" (*City of Clemson Comprehensive Plan 2024* IX-4). Creation of such a committee by Oxford and the

University as well as joining the ITGA would be the premier advanced step in achieving town-gown success and lay the foundation for increased mutual prosperity.

The most fantastic suggestion to improve and maintain town-gown relations involves the use of liaisons from each entity. Implementation of liaisons for improving town-gown relations would correlate to a representative from Oxford in some position within the Lyceum and a counterpart from the University as a non-voting member of the Board of Alderman. While such steps may seem extensive and not necessary due to the already strong relationship between Oxford and UM, these practices would serve as the pinnacle of success in collaboration and provide the most formal connection that is practically possible between the City and University.

A specific suggestion applicable to the near term for Oxford-UM, which would be practical and serve as an immediate example of a joint venture or collaboration, would be the redevelopment of the Whirlpool facility into an outdoor recreation center explained by Ian Banner. This could serve as a joint facility for Oxford-UM since it is connected to an area of high use by the Oxford and University communities alike. Mutual effort in the development of this facility, similar to that of the O.U.T. bus program, would be an example of a joint land-use plan for the shared benefit of both entities in terms of resource management and function. The facility would fill a role for Oxford that is not matched in any other capacity, and would be a great example of the practice of a university supplying the community with a resource such as this "where they can be easily accessed and where they can contribute to the vitality and economic health of businesses in the area" (Sibley 133). Such a step is commonly associated with success in town-gown relations as it was for UNH and Durham.

Oxford and the University of Mississippi are a tremendous example of a town-gown relationship. Together, and in their own rights, they have been very successful over the years. Minor changes in their practices leading to greater formal connections and collaborations would make this local relationship even stronger. The words of Richard Manahan from 1980 are just as relevant to this local condition as they were all those years ago for other town-gown relationships:

> Never before has there been a better opportunity for the local community and the higher education leaders to unite and strive to strengthen support for their community through improved Town & Gown Relations. Each must recognize their pressures and problems to assure commitment to a better community (717).

Oxford and the University of Mississippi could be a shining example for mutual prosperity with relatively little effort to formalize and expand their already profound connections, thus becoming the quintessence of a prosperous Town & Gown.

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