



Editor [Sarah Studley](#): Heard some news you want us to check out? Let me know:
Sarah.Studley@patch.com

[Home](#)[News](#)[Events](#)[Places](#)[Marketplace](#)[Q&A](#)[Volunteer](#)

[Schools](#)

Pace Plans \$100M Revamp in Pleasantville, Sale of Briarcliff Campus

The university's plans will be reviewed in Mount Pleasant.

By [Sarah Studley](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 19, 2011 [Print](#)

[0 Comments](#)

Be the first of your friends to like this.

[Email](#)[Tweet](#)[View full size](#)

Since 1977, the Briarcliff Manor campus of [Pace University](#) has provided housing for almost half of all students studying in [Pleasantville](#).

"There are 3,000 bus trips a year from Briarcliff to Pleasantville," said the university's chief administrative officer and senior vice president William McGrath.

But the school plans to change that, and took the first step by putting the Elm Road campus on the market earlier this year.

"It's a 35-acre property...in the \$25 to \$35 million range," said McGrath.

According to Briarcliff Manager Village Manager Philip Zegarelli, the village is aware of the plans, but does not necessarily see the sale itself having much of an impact.

"Most people consider [the campus] somewhat dormant because it's housing," he said.

Pace plans to make up for the lost housing, administrative buildings and athletic facilities currently located in Briarcliff Manor, by adding buildings to and restructuring the Pleasantville campus, which has been open since 1963.

"Over the last 10 years, the demand for a residential experience has gone up," said McGrath. "Fewer students are willing to commute the days. Now, we have over 100 percent capacity...we have students staying in nearby hotels."

As part of its "master plan," Pace plans to build three new residence halls, bringing the number of beds up to 1,400 in Pleasantville, to make up for the lost Briarcliff space and current hotel overflow.

"This is not a growth strategy," McGrath explained. "It's really replacing the current demand."

The university hopes by housing all Westchester undergraduate students on the 200-acre Pleasantville property and eliminating the commute, the on-campus experience will also be enhanced.

"We are sure it will be a better experience on the Pleasantville campus if they are living here and studying here," said McGrath.

One example of this is creating LLCs or Living Learning Communities, he explained.

"With all students living on campus, it will be much easier for us to do that," he said. "Creating a house of athletics, for example, is very common. We want to really get them engaged around their particular interest."

Two years of studies have gone into the plan, and McGrath said students, neighbors and outside experts have also been brought into the planning process.

While he said some neighbors in the Route 117 area "seemed skeptical" of the plan, "The more they understand how we're reducing entrances, how we're reducing traffic and how we're improving the view; and having all students on campus—rather than traveling back and forth—the more they

understand and are aligned with it," said McGrath.

Patti Dwyer, Pleasantville's village administrator, said local officials sat down with the school last year to review the preliminary plans.

"From what we understand, there really is a more managed approach to the campus," she said. "It may actually be better than it is now."

According to McGrath, the number of entrances to the school will drop from five to three on Route 117 and the parking layout on the campus itself will be entirely reworked.

Currently, "there are parking lots and roads throughout the campus, rather than having a strong campus core with pedestrian pathways," said McGrath, which he believes encourages students and staff to drive from building to building, rather than walking. "It does not encourage the pedestrian experience."

By shifting the more than 2,000 parking spaces to the campus perimeter, he said, the core campus can be beautified.

"Pace has a core value of environmentalism and sustainability," he said, referencing the [Environmental Center](#). "We want to take the parking out, move it to the perimeters and building new residence halls in the central part and create landscaped quads."

As a NCAA Division II university, Pace has also planned for athletic facility changes. Among them are the addition of a tennis court to bring the total up to four; build a turf football/soccer/lacrosse field over the current football field with a track; add turf and lighting to the current baseball field and construct a new grass softball field to be located in the southwest area of the campus.

The university purchased a two-acre parcel in that area from the [Master Vineyard](#) church at the beginning of the year.

Other plans include an expansion of the current Kessel Student Center to accommodate additional students living on campus; the transformation of North Hall (currently a dormitory) into administrative offices; a new welcome center; expansion of Marks Hall for additional office space; and the relocation of the Environmental Center buildings and paddock, along with the addition of a nature walk near the Goldstein Health and Fitness Center.

For now, McGrath said the university is engaging in the regulatory process with the Town of Mount Pleasant, having met with both the town board and planning board.

The town's planning board has been named lead agency in the project and tonight will begin working to determine the scope of an environmental impact study for the project.

"We hope we are able to complete the regulatory process in 18 months," said McGrath. "We could envision starting construction in 2013."

While the university estimates the entire project will cost between \$100 and \$150 million, the first phase will mostly focus on replacing the Briarcliff losses in Pleasantville.

"If everything went really well with timing, we could have everything open in fall 2015," said McGrath. "Some of the other components would happen years after that."

Less immediate plans include building a field house by the new multipurpose field and replacing the campus townhouses with apartments, McGrath said.

"If we can get students here in 2015 or 2016," he said, "after that we can do the other proponents that would further enhance the campus."

While McGrath said the school is "testing the market" for now with respect to the Briarcliff campus, Zegarelli said interested parties should reach out to the village "sooner rather than later."

"We're going to be very focused on it," said the village manager. "They are operating under a special permit and when they sell, they have to identify [the property] as a special permit that will lapse."

In Pleasantville, the school plans to maintain the 115 acres of strictly wooded area on campus to minimize visual impact to the surrounding community.

Said McGrath, "This is an exciting process. It completely transforms the campus. I really think the priorities of this plan are aligned with the priorities of the community."

Interested in a follow-up to this article?



Be the first of your friends to like this.



Email



Tweet



[Follow this article](#)



[Submit a tip](#)



[Add photos & video](#)



[0 Comments](#)

Leave a comment