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Barbara Donerly oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, May 30, 2003

Barbara Donerly (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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Narrator: Barbara Donerly
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Abstractor: Mary E. Yeary
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Year of arrival

Ms. Donerly came to USF in 1992 as an architect project manager.

Circumstances that brought Ms. Donerly to USF

She came to Tampa in 1981 as a young graduate architect from a firm in Texas. The firm was opening up a new office in Tampa to better serve its local clients. She took a few evening courses at USF, but since she lived on the south side of Tampa she did not get to the USF area very often. She met the director of Facilities Planning at a gathering of women architects in Tampa. Then she saw an advertisement for an architect position at USF. "I saw what a great challenge it would be to improve and be a part of improving the campus," states Ms. Donerly. The director of Facilities Planning interviewed her. The director was very enthused about having a woman architect apply for the position.

What was Ms. Donerly hired to do as architect project manager

Ms. Donerly's position involved managing projects from programming to construction. She managed the design process through construction, and actually after construction. Ms. Donerly had six or seven projects to work on in addition to the master plan. Ms. Donerly's was hired to be the person that prepares for the new master plan of the university that was scheduled to take place in the future.

What did the USF campus look like in 1992?

"It was very barren and hot. There was not much shade. It was not generally hospitable. The buildings were designed in the 1960s style. There's some positive and negative aspects to that," states Ms. Donerly.

Positive and negative aspects of the early buildings on campus

"The '60s buildings were designed mostly around breezeways and courtyards, and exterior circulation." She says the design plan for the early buildings was one of energy conservation. The breezeways and courtyards would supply air circulation to provide a cooling effect. Ms. Donerly says both the Fine Arts and the Chemistry buildings were designed in a positive way to provide the cooling effect. "The Fine Arts building has two courtyards and exterior balconies. The building is a pleasant place to be even though current conditions are not maintained," Ms. Donerly states. The Chemistry building has a

three-story breezeway through the center of it. Ms. Donerly says another positive aspect to the early design work of the campus were sunscreens. She says this positive element was later discontinued. She says that sunscreens and grillwork, particularly on the south side of campus, can still be seen on some of the buildings, such as the original library. Ms. Donerly says some of the sunscreens on the Marshall Center have since been taken off, but one can still see sunscreens on the lower level of the Marshall Center. Ms. Donerly says the designers created concrete grill works that would block the sun from the outside as the sun came around the south and at the hottest time of day. The Chemistry and Administration Buildings both had sunscreens. While sunscreens on buildings blocked the heat on the south side of campus, the east and west side of campus had a negative solution to the heat problem. Ms. Donerly says that in the '60s the designers built completely solid walls to the east and west on the buildings located in the areas. She says there are a lot of working environments that have no windows and no opportunities for windows. "That was largely the downside to sticking to that concept so exclusively," states Ms. Donerly.

What is a master plan?

"A master plan can be anything from a free-hand sketch of an assemblage of buildings to a more detailed document," she states. She had a master plan comprised of eighteen specific elements of information. The final results of the master plan are the goals, objectives, and policies for each specific plan.

Major projects on campus when Ms. Donerly arrived

Ms. Donerly says some of the projects on the books when she arrived had a lot of controversy surrounding them in terms of their intended locations. One project was the first parking garage and where it should go. The bookstore and the recreation center were other projects on the books. Another plan was the expansion of the College of Education. The Psychology and Communication Sciences Disorders building was in the initial stages of planning when Ms. Donerly arrived at USF. Also, the CIS building was under construction in 1992.

Controversy surrounding the building of the first parking garage

Ms. Donerly says the first parking garage had several proposed locations. The location where the parking garage is now was one of the proposed locations. Another potential location was on the opposite side of the Marshall Center in the parking lots between the theater buildings and Holly. "The controversy there was the visual obscuring of those buildings from the roads, especially when tours were given to potential students. People didn't want to have the buildings blocked," says Ms. Donerly. Also, the dance department thought the fumes of the parking garage would be detrimental to the dance students. Another concern of the fine arts people was that the parking garage would block the lighting to the costume preparation area. The fine arts people prevailed. The alternative site was on the other side of Crescent Hill. Ms. Donerly says this site would better serve resident students, especially with the construction of new housing.

Construction plans for the bookstore

The original location plans for the bookstore was the Gamma pond, located behind

Gamma Hall (now Betty Castor Hall). This area was a good distance from the Marshall Center. The pond would be closer to larger amounts of service parking. Ms. Donerly says the potential location of the library would provide good visibility of the bookstore from Maple and quick and easy access in and out of parking. The director of facilities planning had a vision that the bookstore would be better served to be joined with the student union. The director had seen this type of joining at other universities. The director was convinced of her idea and convinced the other planners and designers to put the bookstore next to the Marshall Center. Ms. Donerly says the joining would create synergy and a critical mass of activity.

Construction of the MLK Plaza

Ms. Donerly says the Facilities Planning Department had CITF money that needed to be used for a project. They put together ideas of what the central lawn could be, which is now the MLK Plaza. Ms. Donerly says the area behind the Marshall Center, almost three football fields, was totally vacant. They talked to students about putting their money toward something really great. Planners and designers came up with sketch ideas that included fountains, shade trees, and benches. “We wanted a place where individuals could sit in a peaceful environment and large groups could gather,” Ms. Donerly states. She says the final bookstore location was also influenced by the decision to do something with the large vacant area. “We wanted the bookstore to be an expansion of the idea of the plaza,” states Ms. Donerly. She says a local artist had created a statue of Martin Luther King, Jr. They had the artist recast the head and shoulders of Dr. King. The designers and planners wanted the statue to be located in the center by the central walkway, so that students would walk by it. Ms. Donerly says the statue radiates five granite bands pointing to major cities in Dr. King’s life. These bands slice through everything they come in contact with, such as grass and sidewalks. Also, the bust of the statue looks out over a reflecting pool that is located on the other end of the plaza where part of Dr. King’s famous speech is written on a granite wall. The fountains at the plaza were designed to be played in. However, Ms. Donerly says she has not seen any students playing in them.

Any student resistance to using their money for the MLK Plaza

Ms. Donerly says there was no student resistance at all for using their money to build the MLK Plaza. Students immediately saw the benefits to doing that. Ms. Donerly says the potential elements, such as fountains, shade, seating, and being right outside the Marshall Center, really excited students. Other benefits students saw in the plaza were that it would be a place where students could sit and listen to music, interact with one another, and have all kinds of different events. “Students could see the benefits even before it was designed,” she states.

Plans for a new recreation center

Ms. Donerly says the old recreation center did not fulfill the demand for services as the fitness boom arrived. There was not enough room to serve the faculty and staff and those that wanted to use the recreation center. Plans were drawn up for a new recreation center that could better serve the USF community.

Expansion plans for the College of Education Building

Ms. Donerly says the old College of Education building was also designed in a 1960s architectural style. “It was a dark box with windows only on the upper floor,” states Ms. Donerly. The education expansion was an opportunity to create more outdoor space. An immigrant family wanted to give back to the United States by donating money in memory of their son. The family wanted to give back by helping the education department at USF. Ms. Donerly says the family’s money and the college’s money helped to pay for the expansion of the education building. Ms. Donerly says that adjacent to the College of Education was originally the Elm Street Mall where the flea market was located. She says it originally was an abandoned roadbed. “There was never money to make the area hospitable. With the College of Education expanding, we saw the opportunity to reach out to the campus more than just building a building. We always want to serve the needs of those using the building itself, but also try to reach out and make a linkage, and provide shade and provide a place that other campus users will be drawn to,” states Ms. Donerly. “It’s all about generating outdoor activity and communication between faculty and staff,” states Ms. Donerly.

Building plans for the Center for Urban Transportation and Research (CUTR)

CUTR has a transportation focus and is part of the College of Engineering. The college had a great need for space to put operators up as a unit. The operators were housed in trailers and the college wanted to provide a better area for them. The College of Engineering also needed offices for conferences.

Changes in USF’s colors and materials palate

Ms. Donerly says the CIS building was just under construction when she arrived at USF. Ms. Donerly says since it was a very different building than the others on campus, people were drawn to it immediately. The building was a different shape and had trellises, an atrium lobby space, and different colors. About the CIS building, Ms. Donerly says, “It was very well received.” Ms. Donerly says there were efforts to carry the CIS design through to other buildings. The Facilities Planning department wanted to enrich the palate of colors and increase the use of red. Ms. Donerly says the only other building on campus that had any color besides the buff brick was the College of Engineering, which had some rust colors in its terracotta tile. “We immediately started taking the colors on the CIS building and weaving them through the campus, whether it be as a paving material or something else,” states Ms. Donerly. The Facilities Planning department also changed the treatment of roofs on campus. “We’ve tried to do more pitched roofs, particularly on the housing buildings,” she states. Also, the Facilities Planning department has enriched campus buildings by adding circular rotundas and courtyards.

Pizzo Elementary

The Pizzo Elementary is a partnership between USF and Hillsborough County schools. It is intended to be a neighborhood school. “The design is playful and not strict. There is some banding, striping, and green. The school has metal roofs that connect the major buildings, which are also playful,” she states. The roofs are outdoor connectors for the children. The elementary was placed in proximity to the campus child center, which also has an affiliation with the College of Education. “Now between those two we are

building the USF charter school, which is located at MOSI. Funds were raised to give it a permanent home on campus,” states Ms. Donerly.

Managing massive projects at the same time

“We have several project managers. We have architects that represent the University and all of the University’s interests,” Ms. Donerly states. She says there are a lot of entities on campus that are involved with any given project. These entities include budget, utilities, infrastructure, and parking services. “The project manager is the orchestrator and makes sure the design consultant that is hired has taken these other interest groups’ needs and input into consideration of the design of the project,” states Ms. Donerly.

School of Architecture’s involvement with projects

Ms. Donerly says Facilities and Planning works with students from the School of Architecture. “We normally have one to two students from the college on our staff at any given time. They work in our office and they do what they would do as a junior member of any architecture firm. They do everything and are exposed in many different ways to the kinds of things that we do and the kinds of issues that we deal with,” states Ms. Donerly. She serves on student juries from time to time at the School of Architecture, particularly if the students have chosen projects on campus. Often students will choose an upcoming building to do their thesis on and will sometimes ask Ms. Donerly to be on their committee. She keeps in mind the good ideas that the students come up with and looks at things from a different perspective.

What are quads?

A quad is short for quadrangle and is an element most commonly found on universities and college campuses. It is a pedestrian environment surrounded by buildings. “With the master plan we have tried to develop quads that serve each college as the colleges have expanded. What the early planners allowed us to do now is to expand the colleges with an adjacency, unlike older universities that have compact buildings and they have to expand much farther out. All of our colleges have been able to grow in their own district and around their own quads now. The college quads feed into the academic core,” states Ms. Donerly. She says the quad at the College of Engineering is coming along. The College of Education quad was developed and enhanced with the addition and renovation. “When we have a new facility, we take the opportunity as more space has been built, to go back and renovate the old facility. We take the people to the new facility and renovate while they are temporarily in the new one, and then move back some people to the renovated building,” she states.

Is USF running out of room for new buildings?

Ms. Donerly says the intent of the master plan is to make the campus denser and be more aware of how much space a small building will take up. “We can no longer afford to build little facilities in a sea of grass. We are trying to aggregate facilities that have an overall common purpose,” Ms. Donerly states. One example of linking buildings together is the Stavros Center, which was built in proximity to the College of Education. The Stavros Center needed to be double in size. Facilities and Planning provided a linkage between the two by combining the Stavros Center with the College of Education.

Ms. Donerly says to avoid running out of space for buildings, Facilities and Planning's focus is to make the urban core denser and to utilize the many surface parking lots by replacing them with parking structures.

Is USF running out of parking room?

"We are out of room for parking," she states. Ms. Donerly says that at the rate USF is growing in terms of numbers, surface parking is not as productive. The surface parking on campus will become building sites as more parking sites are built. Ms. Donerly says surface parking will not be totally eliminated. USF will still need to provide convenient access for the handicapped and for people that need to quickly go in and out of a particular building. Ms. Donerly says that USF will have more parking garages.

Housing on campus

"The evolution of student housing has been a wonderful thing to be a part of. When I came the housing was some of the saddest parts of the campus. It was so brutal, no landscaping around them, no shade, no color," she states.

Renovation plans for resident housing on campus

Ms. Donerly says there have not only been plans to build new resident housing, but also there have been conscious plans to renovate the existing residence halls and demolish some rooms in order to create lounge spaces for every building. Part of the renovation process has been adding color, a sense of entry, and lounges. The first renovation was the Alpha dorm, now known as Kosove. Alpha was completely gutted and made into an apartment. Renovators added color, a nice lobby, exterior spaces for sitting, and trellises. The renovation of Alpha was followed by the renovation of Gamma Hall, now Castor Hall. The renovation opened a breezeway through the building, so that from the courtyard and Kosove, one can see through Castor Hall to a fountain and pond. Also, a lounge was added on top of the breezeway. Ms. Donerly says a similar renovation is occurring at Beta Hall, the last of the major dorms to be renovated.

New housing buildings on campus and plans for additional residence buildings

"We wanted to draw student life across the campus to enliven it and make the campus more secure. Having all the residents in once place wouldn't do that. We proposed for 1,500 beds to be built next to the College of Engineering to enliven the greenway system and the passive recreational areas down there. We wanted to give more life to another part of the campus," Mrs. Donerly states. The proposal was accepted and Maple housing was built. Facilities and Planning wanted Maple to be for graduate students and families. Ms. Donerly says it was built in proximity to the College of Engineering since many engineering students are graduates and work long hours. Also, Maple is located near health sciences and the medical school. Facilities and Planning believed that many of them might wish to occupy housing on campus. Also, Holly apartments were built in close proximity to already existing housing on campus. Ms. Donerly states that this was done in order to connect more students and housing together. Holly has 725 beds for undergraduates. Holly was built on surface parking. Ms. Donerly says there are construction plans for new resident housing in the master plan. USF is building a collection of buildings for the Greek community. Ms. Donerly says there are

construction plans for new resident housing in the master plan. Also, construction on a new building containing 600 beds was scheduled to begin in June of 2003. The building will be located on the north side of Holly on the corner of Maple. The building will be a combination of apartments and suites.

Significance of ponds and storm water

“In the initial master planning we decided that it no longer made any sense in fulfilling the swift mud requirements for storm water retention with the construction of each building to build a little pit with each building. We would aggregate the construction in the master plan, look at the drainage basins, and build a credit and debit system where by we would build a pond that would provide x number of square feet of impervious area and as we approached maxing that out we would go and build the next pond,” states Ms. Donerly. There are two ponds on the east and west side of the campus. There is a ridge that runs north and south through the center of the campus and the land falls to the east and west. The Gamma pond is on the east, and on the west side is a pond by Fine Arts. “We built those with the infrastructure money in order to provide an amenity, passive recreation, visual relief, and for it to be part of the greenway system that will one day traverse the campus completely from the northeast to southwest,” states Ms Donerly.

Is USF behind the times compared to other universities in terms of planning and the master plan?

“I think we are out in front. We wrote the campus maser plan in 1995 in order to comply with law and other regulations that were designed to have the same comprehensive information provided in existence for all of the state universities,” states Ms. Donerly. There were very detailed guidelines that were written so every university would contain the same information in their master plan. Some of the universities just provided the minimal amount of information required. Ms. Donerly says USF’s master plan was much different than other universities’ in terms of the concept of the greenway being the driver for USF. “Our university and its master plan received a national award from the ASLA, the American Society of Landscape Architects. In that way we are out in front. We have been very true to the concepts provided in the master plan. We have deviated from it as occasions have arisen,” states Ms Donerly. She says the master plan has the flexibility to provide for changes.

Budget and the master plan

“We only get a certain amount of money for a project. With that money we can build a windowless box or we can provide the hospitable environment that the master plan describes and encourages. Aspects of our budget are driven by the planning in the master plan,” states Ms. Donerly.

End of Interview