



OHIO
UNIVERSITY

VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
Cutler Hall 205
Athens, Ohio 45701-2979
Phone: 740-593-2556

September 28, 2015

Dear President McDavis,

As chair of the Ridges Advisory Committee, I am pleased to submit to you the committee's recommendation to approve and adopt the Ridges Framework Plan.

Per your guidance, the Ridges Advisory Committee participated in a series of meetings held by the Ridges Master Plan Committee during the past year and a half. We listened to presentations from the latter group and its subcommittees, and we asked questions and provided feedback to the Ridges Master Plan leadership throughout the planning process.

A reminder on the process:

- On June 30th of 2013, Governor John Kasich signed into law new legislative language to revise the structure of the Ridges Advisory Committee, which is charged with providing feedback and recommendations on the University's plans for the Ridges land and buildings.
- In Fall of 2013, the University established a Ridges Master Plan Committee and tasked the committee with the work of updating the Ridges Master Plan, to address the limitations of past plans that no longer adequately supported the University's strategic goals (1989 Ridges Land Use Plan, 2001 Ridges Architectural Master Plan, Ridges section of the 2006 Campus Master Plan).
- In December 2013, the University held their first meeting with our Advisory Committee to share the structure of the planning process and provided guidance on our involvement.
- In May 2014, the University hired consultants Schooley Caldwell and Associates (SCA) and MKSK to provide assistance to the Ridges Master Plan Committee in developing recommendations for the Ridges property and buildings;
- Throughout the planning process, the Ridges Master Plan Committee provided opportunities for feedback via regularly held meetings with our Committee, several open house presentations and workshops with the campus and local community, and broad representation on three subcommittees that addressed key aspects of the Ridges property: Land Use Subcommittee, Existing Buildings Subcommittee, Academic Uses Subcommittee.
- In January of this year, the University shared with us the initiation of the Comprehensive Master Plan process which addresses overall campus land use and programmatic

placement, and the need to transition the Ridges planning effort to a Framework plan so that the Ridges asset could be considered in the broader context of the University.

- On September 10th, 2015, The Ridges Master Plan Committee submitted to us the Ridges Framework Plan dated September 2, 2015. We each individually reviewed the plan, and our committee met with the Ridges Master Plan Committee chairs on September 21st to share our feedback.

Our Recommendation:

We believe that the Ridges Framework Plan has achieved a high standard in providing analysis and guidance for the future of this important asset. We agree with and support the key recommendations of the plan. The final document incorporates concerns and recommendations we shared in the course of the planning process, and is reflective of a successful collaboration between the University and local community. Among other key recommendations, the plan:

- Recognizes the potential for development and reuse of the Kirkbride Complex and other structures
- Prioritizes “saving the Kirkbride,” as Ridges Advisory Committee member Marjorie Stone emphasized
- Recommends stabilizing high priority structures on the Historic Green until a use is determined and implemented (We were pleased that the University moved forward on this initiative during the planning process and that the work will be complete soon.)
- Explores opportunities to expand outdoor recreation and access to the property for the community
- Recognizes several programmatic opportunities for adaptable uses of the existing buildings, as well as opportunities to benefit the community and university through activities in other parts of the landholding
- Identifies areas of the property to be protected from development.

We were concerned when we first learned that the Ridges Master Plan (a completed executable vision) was transitioning to a Ridges Framework Plan (providing guidance for categories and characteristics of appropriate uses). However we understood that extending the planning timeline to allow the Comprehensive Master Plan process to fully consider The Ridges as a resource provides an optimal path to realizing the potential of this asset. In that respect, as the University completes its Comprehensive Master Plan, we ask that you consider and emphasize the following recommendations which we believe are valuable to the community:

- Utilize the buildings and/or the land to renovate or build for graduate student housing and retirement/faculty housing
- Make the vision statement more prominent and understood
- Consider renaming what is referred to in the Ridges Framework Plan as the “Historic Green” to something else. For many, the label “Historic Green” is most readily associated with the College Green
- Include prioritization and phasing plans for final recommendations
- Include financial pro formas and feasibility estimates so that those utilizing the plan to execute are aware of the costs
- We like the idea of the Ridges property as a potential complement and addition to what the OU Inn offers, and believe that this is a destination that people will want to come to
- The dark sky and ready access to natural areas are assets that should be preserved and can be leveraged to promote interest in The Ridges

- The pedestrian bridge suggested in the Framework Plan should be given low priority. The committee recommends adopting other less costly and more immediate solutions such as opening the view & repairing/rebuilding the entrance area off the roundabout.
- We encourage the University to extend consideration of the community value of historic structures to the broader context of the Comprehensive Master Plan for the Athens campus

We appreciate the commitment the University has demonstrated through this process to engaging the community. We look forward to a continued spirit of collaboration as the potential for The Ridges envisaged in the Framework Plan is realized over time.

Sincerely,

Stephen T. Golding, VP for Finance and Administration, Ohio University and Chair of the Ridges Advisory Committee

Ridges Advisory Committee:

_____	Charlie Adkins, County Commissioner
_____	Pamela Callahan, Community Member
_____	Chris Knisely, City Council President
_____	Paul Logue, Athens City Planner
_____	Marjorie Stone, Community Member

Cc:

Ridges Master Plan Committee Co-Chairs:

Shawna A. Bolin, University Planner

Dr. Joseph Shields, V.P. for Research and Creative Activity, Dean of the Graduate College