

SUNY Albany was in the centre of the city in a series of overcrowded university and other buildings such as warehouses that had been co-opted to provide teaching facilities. The SUCF was used to overhaul the educational programmes and facilities of such state institutions. The architects of the State's Division of the Budget made some preliminary sketches for a new Albany campus and consequently a site of 290 acres later expanded to 360 acres (145 hectares) that had housed the Albany Country Club on the outskirts of the city was chosen for the new campus rather than one of three more central sites. These urban sites were rejected because of their high cost and the necessity for the removal of family homes before construction could begin.

The members of the country club were opposed to the state's acquisition of the land and politicians feared that moving the university out of the city would further lead to the decline of central Albany. The former were placated by the price paid for the site and the latter by the decision, again led by Rockefeller, to build a new state government centre and plaza adjacent to the existing state buildings in the centre of the city. It was subsequently built, designed by Harrison and Abromovitz and now named after Rockefeller (see Figure 7.30).

The initial goal for the university was to provide for 10,000 students with about half living on campus. Edward Durrell Stone was hired to be the architect of the university after Wallace Harrison, the original master planner, withdrew from his role. Stone's scheme is simple (see Figure 7.31). All the academic buildings are clustered and united by a huge podium and continuous roof – a sort of megastructure. The purpose was to reduce the cost of roads and

utilities and to provide a reasonably comfortable environment during the severe upstate New York winters. (Unfortunately the configuration of buildings leads to a harsh environment in the winter by channelling winds into the complex's open spaces.) The dormitories were clustered in four groups around the main podium to form a pedestrian precinct that can be crossed on foot in 5 minutes. Each dormitory cluster was located around a quadrangle formed by a three-storey podium. Within each quadrangle a 23-storey tower housing 1200 students was located. Facilities were provided for recreation and parking on the perimeter of the campus (Birr, 1994).

Stone had recently completed the Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology in Rawalpindi and he adapted features of that design to the Albany campus. The campus is a symmetrical complex decorated with colonnades, domes and fountains. In the middle of the central podium is a tower set in an open space that acts as a node. The rectilinearly planted trees enhance the formality of the composition. Students gather here for many events, planned and spontaneous. At a lower level there is a fountain and reflecting pool. The main architectural experience comes from the sequential set of vistas one sees in moving from the periphery to the centre of the complex.

Stone created a superblock with a pedestrian environment within it. New buildings, however, fall outside this block. A 1999 analysis of the campus by the Hillier Group found that first time visitors were much confused by the university's layout. No landmarks give a sense of direction and the symmetrical design makes it difficult to relate one's location to specific destinations.