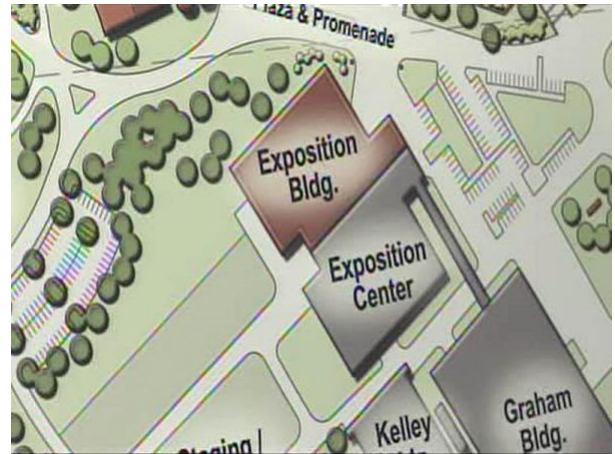


# Master plan unveiled for fairgrounds' future

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State Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler on Wednesday laid out plans for a \$121 million makeover for the North Carolina State Fairgrounds.

The 48 projects that the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services want to complete over the next 20 to 30 years are designed to improve access, exposition space, traffic flow and pedestrian safety at the fairgrounds and will allow the state to upgrade and expand its services, Troxler said.



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"Rather than build and evolve without a plan, we feel that any further improvements (should) fit into an overall framework for the future," he said.

The master plan, which has been developed over the past few years, calls for developing three main entrance gates, building new parking lots to accommodate 5,000 vehicles, installing 300 horse trailers at the James B. Hunt Horse Complex and setting aside space for a campground with nearly 200 campsites.

The fairgrounds has been home to the State Fair since 1928, and the last major building expansion took place in the 1970s. The Kerr Scott Building was completed in 1972, the James E. Holshouser Building in 1974 and the Jim Graham Building in 1975.

The Exposition Center, which opened four years ago, was the last new building at the fairgrounds.

Troxler said progress on the planned projects depends on the economy. The fairgrounds receives no state funding and relies on income generated from the annual State Fair and from trade shows to pay for its operations and any capital improvements.

Attendance at the 2008 State Fair was down almost 11 percent last fall from the record levels of 2007 – despite adding a day to the schedule – and the tight economy has adversely affected other events at the fairgrounds.

Reporter: [Dan Bowens](#)

Photographer: [Geof Levine](#)

Web Editor: [Matthew Burns](#)

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