NTU has unveiled an ambitious 15-year masterplan to transform its Yunnan Garden campus into a mini city. And there's even a possibility of having a light rail system leading into the university.

Key to the masterplan is a new Campus Centre which will form the heart of the university. It will have retail shops, cafes, and even a cinema, located alongside academic and residential facilities.

And by 2015, there will be an additional 5,000 hostel spaces for undergraduates.

The idea, is to break down what its incoming President and provost, Professor Bertil Andersson calls, psychological "glass walls", to encourage people of different research interests to meet and exchange ideas.

"That's what a university is about. It's interaction, interaction between brains."

Interactivity will also find its way into the classrooms, thanks to smaller class sizes and virtual technologies.

There will also be a bigger focus on inter-disciplinary collaboration, and NTU's new medical school with the UK's Imperial College will be an example of that.

Professor Andersson says medical students will split their time between the new school at Novena, and Yunnan Garden, when it's completed in 2014.

"They have to learn a little bit about management in the business school, they have to learn engineering, because my belief is that in the next 10 years, one of the most key areas for medicine is inter-disciplinarity between medicine and engineering." Hip replacements, various parts of the eye, heart stents, even going into neurology in the future."

Under the new plan, there will also be a network of parks, ponds and pedestrian walkways, with green features built into the design of new buildings.

The network of shuttle buses that currently ply the campus roads may soon be complemented by electric ones, and Professor Andersson is optimistic that the upcoming CleanTech business park nearby will create enough critical mass for a light rail system running into the university.

There will also be a new road leading in from Pioneer North Road.
NTU is Singapore’s largest university campus, spread over 200 hectares.

It currently has 33,000 students and 3,000 faculty staff and researchers from over 70 countries.

- By Hoe Yeen Nie