

Open Space Typology



Active recreation areas, such as this recreation field at the University of Colorado at Boulder, provide opportunities for organized and informal outdoor athletic activity.

The range of open space types found on college campuses extends from large, open fields to intimate enclaves. The importance of variation in landscape and open space design lies in the manner in which students, faculty, staff, and visitors are able to participate within the campus landscape. Different activities call for different treatments in size, landscaping, and furnishing of a space. More importantly, campus open spaces and their relationship to the built environment and natural features assist in the creation of memories of the experience of the place – memories that inspire recollection, return visits to campus and, in some cases, financial support of the University.

The following is an open space typology consistent with the majority of college campuses. The range of open space described is considered important to the language of the campus in its embodiment of the mission of the university.

Active Recreation

The purpose of the Active Recreation space is to provide the student body with the opportunity for both organized and informal outdoor athletic activity. Typically, active recreation fields are sized to accommodate at least one standard-dimension soccer field. Depending on the needs of athletic departments, these fields may also require temporary or permanent seating areas and storage facilities. On most campuses, active recreation areas are located toward the perimeter of the campus and are limited to a few large parcels. The University of Denver currently maintains active recreation fields immediately west of the Ritchie Center, accommodating two regulation-sized turf soccer fields and an artificial turf lacrosse field, with the intention of expanding this resource west to High Street. Because of the expansion of student housing to the southern portion of campus, it may be necessary to study options to create additional active recreation spaces in this portion of the campus.



The recreation fields west of the Ritchie Center are conveniently located to serve both athletic facilities and a primary campus residential zone.

Passive Spaces

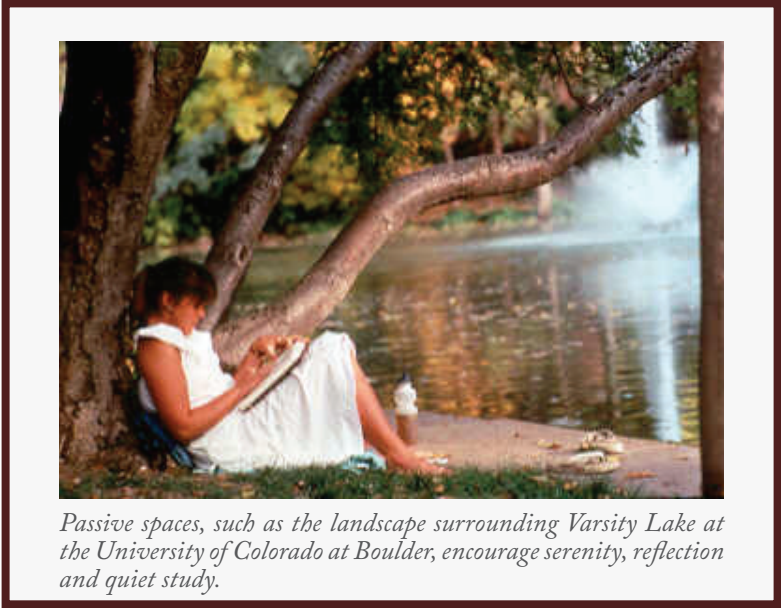
Passive spaces are those that encourage serenity, reflection, and quiet study through the use of landscaping, water, art, etc. These areas tend to be framed by buildings and/or mature landscape, and range in size depending on the adjacent land uses, maturity of the landscape, and built environment. Walkways that run through passive spaces tend to be narrow and may be constructed of higher-quality materials such as brick pavers or stone. These spaces are typically screened from the noise of active areas and adjacent streets, and may be designed to accentuate views of landmarks, buildings, or landscape features. Passive spaces may be located throughout the campus, but tend toward areas of academic use or those of historic significance. Given the

extent of landscape and quality of materials used, these spaces are often limited to a few locations throughout campus.

The Harper Humanities Garden at the University of Denver is the campus’ primary example of a passive space, with its dense, mature landscaping, water feature, and relationship to Evans Chapel and Mary Reed Hall, with Graduation Green serving as another example. Additional passive spaces are suggested in the redevelopment of the southern portion of campus, particularly related to academic facilities and the Promenade.



The Harper Humanities Garden on the DU campus is an example of a passive space. The water feature, mature landscape, and scale of the surrounding buildings create a serene atmosphere.



Passive spaces, such as the landscape surrounding Varsity Lake at the University of Colorado at Boulder, encourage serenity, reflection and quiet study.



With its vast open lawn, adjacency to the campus center, and central location, the Campus Green is a primary example of a large gathering space at the University of Denver



Sloping down from University Hall to the Driscoll Center, Carnegie Green is another DU example of a large gathering area.

Large Gathering Areas

Large gathering areas are often the defining structure of a campus and its most visible landscape features. Quadrangles and vast sweeping lawns are examples of such areas which were historically developed to give shape to their perimeters, to accentuate landforms, and to provide large spaces for student gatherings. These areas tend to be framed by buildings, perimeter roads, or significant natural features and are located in the most active areas of campus. The landscape of large gathering areas tends to be regular and formal at the perimeter with little to no additional landscaping to the interior of the space. High-volume pedestrian corridors are typically located to the perimeter of large gathering spaces, while walkways of varying capacity may transverse these areas. Public art, fountains, seating

areas, and other features may also be included in the landscape design.

The Campus Green at the University of Denver is its primary example of a large gathering space, framed by the Driscoll Center, Greek Row, Evans Avenue, and the Shwayder Arts building. Carnegie Green, a secondary space is also found south of the Science Green, flanked by Penrose Library, Mary Reed Hall and the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management (HRTM). Plans for future redevelopment of the land due south and west of the Driscoll Center will strengthen this space. An additional large gathering area should also be considered in the future development of the southern portion of campus.



Large gathering areas define the structure of the built environment and are designed to accommodate large gatherings, much like this quadrangle at Yale University.

Small Gathering Areas

While large gathering areas are meant to accommodate crowds on a grand scale (such as graduation ceremonies, outdoor concerts and lectures, etc.), small gathering areas serve a more intimate audience. These spaces, which may be used for picnics, class meetings, and cultural presentations are typically located in quiet areas framed by buildings – often off of a main quadrangle. The landscape of small gathering spaces tends to be rich in planting at the edges, leaving the interior of the space open for flexible use. Low-traffic pedestrian walkways are likely to traverse these spaces, while high-volume corridors are typically located within sight but out of range of noise disruption. Small gathering areas tend to be located in areas that support academic, cultural, and administrative functions.

Graduation Green on the University of Denver campus is an example of a small gathering area, perhaps on a slightly larger scale than is typical. In the future development of the campus, it is suggested that more opportunities be invested in creating additional small gathering areas throughout the campus, especially south of Iliff, near the professional schools, and in association with all new campus buildings.





The Lawn at the University of Virginia is an example of a symbolic campus space, serving as a landscape icon for the campus.

Symbolic Spaces

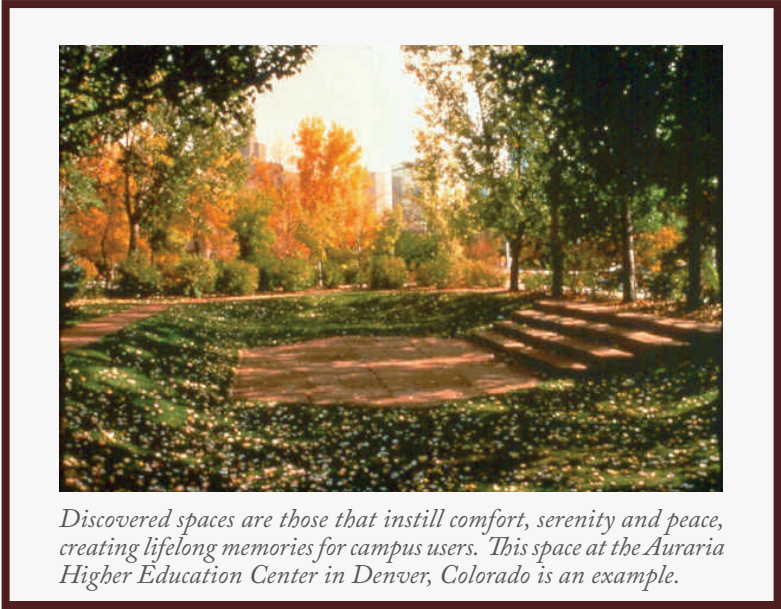
Most memorable college campuses are defined by a significant symbol or icon, whether through architecture, landscape, or exterior spaces. Symbolic outdoor spaces embody the physical identity of the university through the transition of built space to landscape using high-quality building and hardscape materials and hearty plant species. The quality of a space as symbol cannot be forced and is arrived at only through time and a consistently high level of care.

The University of Denver, through the Land Use Planning process, has identified a potential symbolic space to be planned and nurtured in the future. While the Promenade currently exists in pieces, including Campus Green, Science Green, Carnegie Green, Graduation Green, Harper Humanities Garden, and the overlain campus arboretum, a plan for this space based on both continuity and transition is necessary. Done correctly, the Promenade will become one of the Rocky Mountain West's true symbolic campus spaces.

Discovered Spaces

The process of learning and discovery is inherent on college campuses, and landscape features are not excluded. While first impressions may be based on symbolic spaces or vast quadrangle, memories are often made on the discovered spaces – places off the beaten path that instill comfort, serenity, and peace. The importance of the discovered space is different to each individual and, as such, these places may vary greatly throughout the campus; however, they typically share a common theme of high-quality material, site furnishing and richness in landscape. Discovered spaces do not require a significant amount of land – even a comfortable bench near a flowering hedgerow may

qualify – and thus may be located throughout campus. The upper terrace immediately west of Mary Reed Hall is an example of a discovered space on the DU campus, along with the benches located beneath mature trees at the south end of the Harper Humanities Garden. The development of further discovered spaces is suggested to enhance the memory in the campus landscape.



The placement of benches in a secluded landscape may create memories that go beyond typical campus structural features.



West of Mary Reed, water and lush vegetation combine to create a discovered space.



School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management



Bounded on three sides by Sturm Hall, this enclave could be enhanced by creating opportunities for small outdoor gatherings or quiet reflection.

Spaces Shaped by Buildings

As previously described, large gathering spaces are often the defining structure of a campus. At their perimeter, however, it is necessary to build to a high level of density to accommodate the interior space needs of the university. In these instances, it is important to develop interstitial outdoor spaces that are framed by the built environment to complement the building interiors. These spaces vary in size and level of landscape treatment, and are located throughout a campus. The manner in which a campus is developed (i.e., as a “buildings in a park” setting or as formal quadrangles) defines the level to which spaces framed by buildings are found throughout its environs.

The University of Denver currently maintains few spaces defined by buildings (the spaces outside of Sturm Hall and Graduation Green are examples) due to its pattern of development based less on high-density quadrangle perimeters and more on the creation of a series of larger outdoor spaces. Nelson Hall’s courtyard is a recent move to create more of this type of space. Should future needs require more density throughout the campus, the buildings should be developed so as to shape the spaces between.



By planning building relationships to define the interstitial areas between, campuses are able to create open spaces that complement the building interiors. This is an example from Cranbrook University in Michigan.

Building Forecourts

A college’s body of student and faculty is social by nature. All outdoor spaces encourage some level of social interaction, from large gatherings to one-on-one conversation. During class changes, however, these spaces may not be the most convenient for interaction as they are separated from the areas in which people are moving to and from building entrances. The development of building forecourts as outdoor areas is important to the development of relationships in the academic setting, and allows a transition from exterior to interior space. Building forecourts are most often located at the main entrance to a facility and adjacent to high-traffic pedestrian corridors. The forecourts may include seating areas, hardscaped plazas, perimeter

landscaping, and art and water features, and are sized to accommodate the volume of traffic experienced at class change.

Building forecourts at the University of Denver include those outside Sturm Hall, the Ritchie Center’s Coors Fitness Center, Olin Hall, and the Sturm College of Law/Ricketson Law Building. Through the future development of the Promenade, it is imperative that the University continue to incorporate forecourts in all new building design and retrofit forecourts to existing buildings where none currently exists.





The entries to Penrose Library (above) and Shwayder Arts building (below) are relatively sterile in their design and function. Redesigning these entrances in the style of formal entry courts could enhance the landscape language of the entire campus.

Formal Entry Forecourt

As opposed to building forecourts, which should be located at the majority of campus buildings, formal entry forecourts are typically reserved for major campus destination buildings as defined by architecture or use. Libraries, lecture halls, and historic buildings often signify the heart of a campus, and it is at these locations that formal entry courts are typically found. These spaces are larger than other building forecourts and are designed to complement adjacent architecture with the highest-quality materials. Formal building forecourts tend to be hardscaped plazas highlighted by but not overwhelmed by landscape features.

The forecourts outside the belltower at the Ritchie Center and the Newman Center for the Performing Arts are examples of formal entry forecourts on the DU campus. It may be desirable in the future to retrofit a more substantial formal forecourt at the entrance to Penrose Library as well, giving the University formal entry forecourts in all three major campus zones.



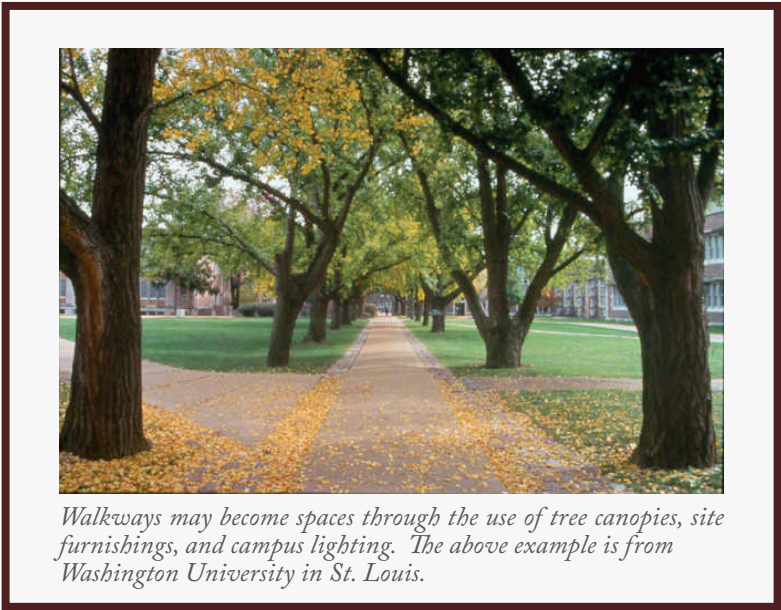
Formal entry forecourts celebrate entrances to major campus destination buildings, such as this example at Columbia University in New York.

Walkway as Place

Campus walkways are not just thoroughfares for transporting people from place to place; they should also be considered an integral part of the campus built and outdoor environment. It is on walkways that students cross paths with faculty and visitors cross paths with administrators, and where students seek shelter and safety between buildings. Walkways that are treated as a place are comfortable settings for walking, for sitting, and for conversation. These walkways tend to be complemented by a dense canopy of trees overhead, regular location of benches, tables, and other site accessories, and consistent campus lighting. Walkways as place also help people navigate the campus, with axes

on significant building entrances, clear building signage, and campus maps located enroute.

The treatment of its walkway surfaces is one of more memorable points of the campus landscape at the University of Denver, particularly through Graduation Green. In the development of the Promenade, this treatment should be continued and expanded upon, to give the walkways a sense of place from building to building. The consistency of treatment of the Promenade can unify the campus from north to south and provide a comfortable “place” in the outdoor environment.



Walkways may become spaces through the use of tree canopies, site furnishings, and campus lighting. The above example is from Washington University in St. Louis.



Above is an example of the attention to detail in the walkways at the University of Denver.



The dropoffs at Mary Reed Hall (above) and the Ritchie Center (below) effectively embody the importance of the respective buildings with quality materials accentuating memorable architecture.

Drop-off Space

Drop-off areas should not be considered simply a matter of vehicular circulation. They are, in fact, a first impression of the university for many people, and used by both the vehicle and the pedestrian. Through the treatment of drop-offs, the university may instill an order and clarity to vehicular routes while enhancing the quality of the landscape and pedestrian environment. Where drop-offs become more than simply automobile routes; pavers and stone, concrete bands, bollards, and special landscape treatments may enhance or replace curb and gutter and other typically mundane roadway treatments. The treatment of the drop-off as space is especially important in areas at which visitors are entering campus buildings, as this may directly affect their first impression.

The treatment of drop-offs at the University of Denver is consistently of high quality, including those at the Ritchie Center, the Warren Street entrance to campus, and the Newman Center for the Performing Arts. This practice should continue with other visitor-oriented buildings developed around campus.



By enhancing the treatment of materials in vehicular drop-offs, important campus visitor destinations can be accentuated such as this example at the University of British Columbia.

Outdoor Dining

Areas designated for outdoor dining are assets to the campus environment, encouraging interaction, study, and comparatively lengthy stays. Outdoor dining areas are typically located adjacent to indoor dining facilities and along high-traffic pedestrian corridors. Landscape treatments and umbrellas are used to provide shade to those using the space. Dining areas may range in size from small patios with just a few tables to dining hall-scaled terraces with dozens of tables. These areas may also be planned to accommodate large, campus-wide gatherings by removing the tables to provide a vast open area free from obstacles.

The University of Denver has a small outdoor dining area located adjacent to the Driscoll Center and Evans Avenue. The location of this area is not ideal because it lacks visibility. In future campus development, additional opportunities for location of outdoor dining facilities should be considered, especially where related to the Driscoll Center and other dining facilities and their relationship to the promenade.

Over the last few years, the addition of the dining porch at Nelson Hall and Nagel Hall South Plaza, which is currently under construction, have increased the range of outdoor dining options on the campus.



Nelson Hall Outdoor Patio



Outdoor dining areas, such as this example from the Auraria Higher Education Center in Denver, contribute to campus open space by providing spaces for interaction, study, and lengthy stays.