

Campus Gateways and Hierarchy



University of Denver



Illinois Wesleyan University

The importance of the gateway to a college or university campus cannot be overstated. Gateways may act as ceremonial entrances to the campus, define campus boundaries, and assist in wayfinding. In addition, gateways often give the visitor a first impression of the campus. The design of gateways and their hierarchy should be both conscious of the image that the university maintains and responsive to the distinct role of the gateway at different campus locations.

The Ceremonial Gateway

Ceremonial gateways mark the entrance to features of the campus that are significant due to their history, architecture, or other special elements. In most cases, a campus maintains no more than one ceremonial gateway and, as such, these entries are designed to the highest quality and detail. Ceremonial gateways are composed of campus identification signage and significant amounts of landscaping, and may include elements not standard throughout campus but responsive to the history and/or architecture of the area they serve. (For instance, a ceremonial gateway to an historic area may use lighting fixtures typical of the era in which the campus was first developed.)

The Warren Street entrance to the University of Denver is the ceremonial gateway to the campus, complete with signage, landscape, and historic buildings. In order to improve this gateway, the University should work with the Iliff School of Theology to improve the southern portion of the gateway to a level consistent with the historic importance of this campus entry.

The Primary Gateway

Primary gateways mark the most visible campus entries, announcing the University to all who might pass by or through. Primary gateways also mark important campus visitor locations, such as admissions and other administration areas. Because they are seen by the most people, primary gateways must at once be a graceful first impression of the university while at the same time maintaining a level of utility in wayfinding for the campus.

Primary gateways most often direct the visitor to something, whether parking, a campus map, or an information booth. These gateways consist of campus signage, significant landscaping, and pedestrian and accent lighting, and often contain campus directories, information booths, or other wayfinding elements.

Urban campuses like the University of Denver may struggle to incorporate typical primary gateways given the urban transportation structure. In these cases, the design of these gateways must be modified. Current primary gateways at the University of Denver include the intersection of Buchtel Boulevard and University Boulevard, the intersection of Evans Avenue and University Boulevard, and the Warren Street entrance. However, with the exception of Warren Street, these intersections cannot effectively direct visitors to destinations. Therefore, the University should investigate opportunities to enhance the Asbury entrance off of University Boulevard. Like the Warren Street entrance, this entrance serves an important visitor destination to the campus (including the Ritchie Center, the Alumni House, and the Sturm College of Law) at a location fairly unimpeded by the high volume of traffic on Evans Avenue. These locations also serve the north and south limits of the campus core and may be configured to direct visitors to campus parking facilities.

In addition to the Asbury and Warren gateways, attention should be directed toward the creation of a gateway at the intersection of Buchtel Boulevard and University Boulevard. The University should continue to press public agencies to undertake a redesign of this intersection, ensuring an inspiring first impression

for the University at this important location. The University should also work with business owners at the intersection of Evans Avenue and University Boulevard to create a more visible gateway to the campus at this location. While the gateway at the northwest corner of this intersection should not mirror that of the southwest corner, efforts may be made to improve the retail district to incorporate landscape, site accessories, and lighting consistent with the University. The creation of an improvement district may also assist in creating a more comfortable pedestrian environment, making the transition from the University to campus-related commercial more seamless.

The Secondary Gateway

Secondary gateways, much like primary gateways, are located at high-volume entrances to the campus. While primary gateways typically mark visitor-oriented entries to the campus, secondary gateways serve entrances used by the campus population including large parking facilities and residence halls. These gateways again include campus signage and landscaping, but to a lesser level than that of ceremonial and primary gateways. Secondary gateways may also include campus directories, but higher levels of directional assistance, such as information booths, are typically not included in the design.

As with primary gateways, the University of Denver has two types of secondary gateways – those located at high-volume intersections (such as High Street and Evans Avenue) and those at destination entries

to campus (such as High Street and Asbury). The importance of these gateways to the campus will grow as the High Street corridor becomes integral to the local transportation network with the opening of the DU Light Rail Station. In response, the University should investigate methods to improve these gateways in a way similar to their opposites on University Boulevard. Like the University Boulevard gateways at Asbury and Warren, secondary gateways should be developed at Asbury and Warren along High Street to direct the campus population to parking and residential facilities, and should include appropriate signage, drop-offs, and directional support. The High Street/Evans Avenue intersection should also be improved, announcing the University to the traffic heading east on Evans and directing visitors to nearby parking facilities.

In addition to the above, secondary gateways could be located at the following locations: Wesley Avenue and University Boulevard, to announce the southern portion of the campus and guide visitors and campus users to current and future development and parking in this part of campus; High Street and Buchtel Boulevard, to mark the northwestern portion of the campus and its visitor and student-oriented uses; and, the intersections of Iliff Avenue and High Street and Iliff and University Boulevard, to identify the campus along this collector street and direct campus users to parking facilities and visitor destinations.