

Planning Districts

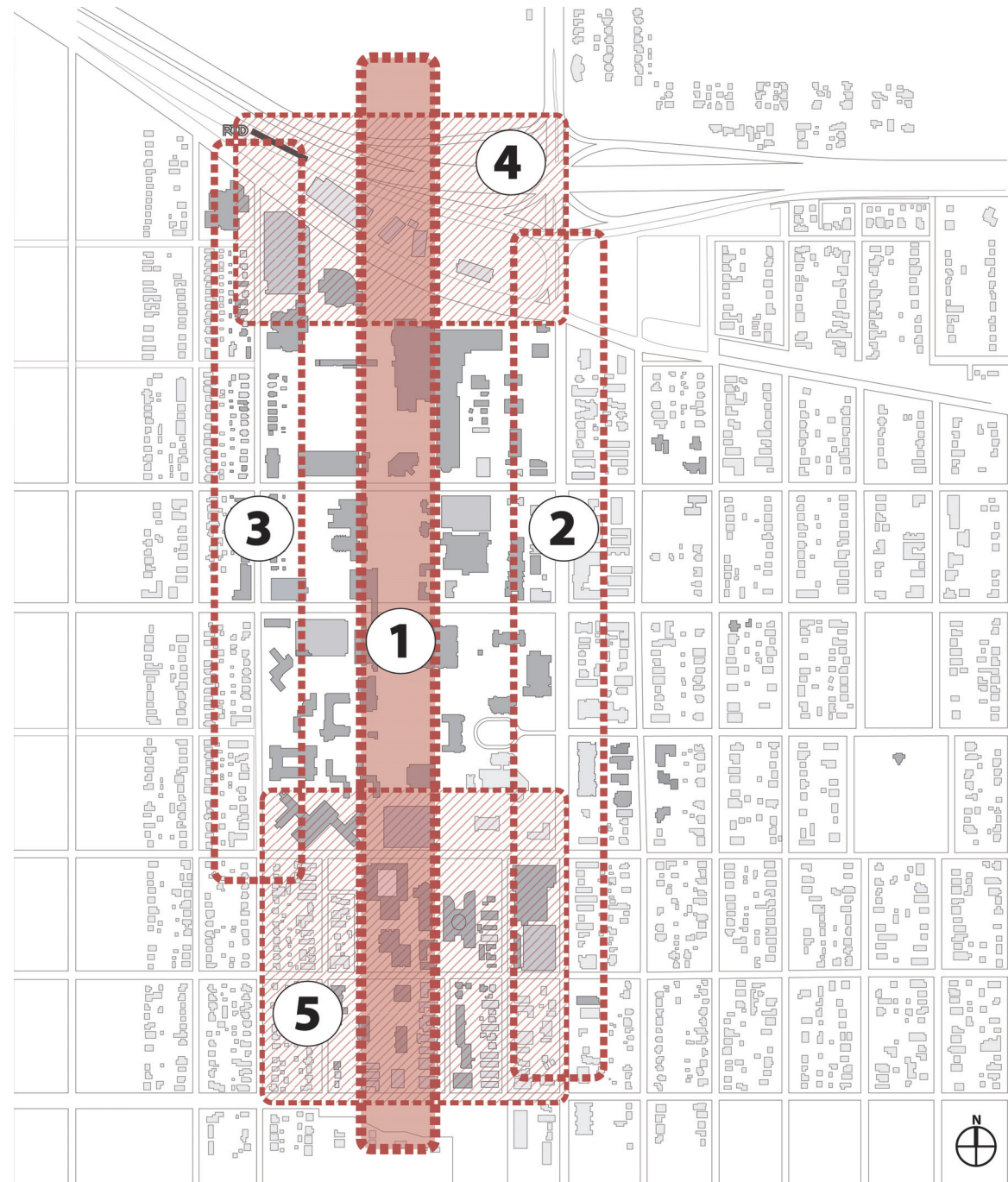
Campus planning is an iterative process. The Land Use Plan for DU represents an initial step intended to develop consensus toward a framework for long-term growth and outline concepts for further study at district scale. While the Land Use Plan has tested and explored a number of design concepts, it is expected that these design strategies will be explored in more detail as part of future district planning studies.

The district plans should be developed as more specific programmatic or capital improvement needs are identified. While the South Campus has been a relatively stable area in the history of the campus, projects like the Newman Center for the Performing Arts provide incentives for the creation of a vision for the district that is integrated with the core campus. However, following the completion of the Newman Center for the Performing Arts and the near-term development of the New School of Engineering and Computer Science, DU may identify the need to review long-term development options and create a new open space there. This redevelopment will likely involve a substantial investment by DU and, therefore, needs to fit seamlessly into the overall plan for both the district and the campus, thus establishing a need to develop a detailed planning approach for the South Campus.

As a general rule of thumb, the University should consider undertaking a district plan for any capital improvement project over \$2,000,000, to guide the design and development of the project.

This chapter outlines preliminary planning concepts and design considerations for five districts on the campus:

1. Promenade
2. University Boulevard
3. High Street
4. Buchtel Boulevard
5. South Campus



Campus Districts Map

Promenade

The overarching objective of the Promenade is to create an environment that is beginning to be an exciting corridor of activity. Running north to south through the entire campus, the Promenade would unify a wide spectrum of land uses. The principal strategy is to expand the Campus and Old Science Greens, and reinforce the pedestrian nature of the center of campus. While the treatment of this spine is expected to vary in landscape, width, and activity, its continuity is to be a uniquely identifiable feature on the DU campus.

Just as prior projects have made significant landscape contributions, it is recommended that all future building projects facing the Promenade be expected to contribute five percent of the project budget specifically for improvements to the Promenade.

Site Design

- The principal pedestrian/bicycle pathway will vary in width based on volume of traffic, but in general, this path should not be less than 15’ wide (sufficient to accommodate a fire truck).
- The Promenade is an open space system of linked spaces. This open space network is complementary to the location of buildings at its perimeter and provides the focal point of the architecture of those facilities.
- Care should be taken not to create long impenetrable buildings that restrict movement in an east-west direction to and from the Promenade and the High Street and University Boulevard areas.

- While the University standard lightpoles, benches, and other site furnishings should be used as part of a policy to promote a cohesive campus, the Promenade should have an enhanced character that is distinct. Suggestions include the purposeful use of exterior art, more vigorous plantings, and other prime landscape elements to reinforce the central theme.

Scale and Massing

- Buildings created at the edge of the Promenade should have uses that attract activity. Main entries to general classroom buildings or a dining hall are good examples of features to site along the corridor. A service building is an example of a building that should not be sited along the Promenade. When carefully articulated, five-story buildings such as Nelson Hall and the Daniels College of Business are thought to be within the character of the campus core.
- Primary building entrances are to address the Promenade.
- Building edges need to be animated with windows and doors. The concept is not to site buildings with solid walls along the corridor.
- Lighting at night should provide an inviting and safe atmosphere to the core. Programs which have heavy evening use should be sited along the Promenade.



Building entrances are more than just means of access and egress – they are also celebration points and gathering areas. The architecture and site design of these portals need to capture their prominence in defining the sense of community on a campus. (Keene State College Academic Building) Buildings along the Promenade need to have a similar response.



Landscape and buildings are equal partners in defining the symbology of a campus. At DU the Promenade should be treated as a symbol of civic identity. First-time visitors will immediately understand its significance. For students, faculty, and staff the corridor would be the basis for developing lasting memories of the campus. Buchtel Tower and its adjacency to Graduation Green at the University of Denver is a good example of symbolic architecture within an open space.



The Lawn at the University of Virginia (above) is a classic example of a symbolic landscape.



(Above) Colby College is also a good example of a campus with several large open spaces: the Main Mall, the Chapel Lawn, and Roberts Row. All three spaces radiate from the Miller Library, the most important building on the campus, but only one is seen as the signature space for the campus. It would be awkward to consider any redesign that may alter this hierarchy.

University Boulevard (North of Evans)

Redevelopment along University Boulevard is anticipated to include mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail and office or residential use above. The University may choose to acquire and develop parcels along the east side of the street, providing additional office space and housing for the campus while enhancing the campus edge and creating a revenue stream from rented retail space at the street level. The district planning for University Boulevard should address urban design issues as well as models for creating a business improvement district and funding.

Site Design

- Buildings should provide a sense of scale and visual interest that supports pedestrian and retail activity.
- A significant proportion of the building face for new construction should be within 17 - 20’ from the curb.
- Street tree planting should reflect the tree canopy character north of I-25, and be placed between the curb and sidewalk along the entire length of each block.
- There should be distinction between walkways and driveways. Where the two intersect, the paving material/pattern of the walkway should be used to maintain its continuity and enhance safety for pedestrians.
- Plazas should be programmed as active open spaces with building entries leading into them. Amenities such as outdoor dining, shade trees,

benches, and paving treatment should distinguish plazas as spaces separate from the sidewalk.

- Well placed bicycle storage/racks would be beneficial in encouraging less reliance upon the automobile. Racks should be designed for bicycles to be parked parallel to pedestrian flows.
- A palette of materials should be developed, reinforcing the campus edge/”urban” character of this area.

Scale and Massing

- Buildings typically should be no more than two to three stories at street level, with taller elements set back from the street edge. Some exceptions, either on corner lots or other significant locations, may be considered.
- New building forms that are wider than 30 feet should be modulated to capture a rhythm of windows and entries common in existing buildings.
- A clear visual definition should exist between street level and upper floors through change of materials, colors, fenestration, and/or use of canopies and awnings.
- Simple orthogonal building forms with pitched roofs should predominate.
- Blank walls along the street edge should be avoided.

Parking

- Off-street parking areas should not protrude beyond the front building edge, and should be accessed from alleys rather than the primary street.
- On-street parking should be encouraged to be a buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic.
- Where curb cuts cannot be avoided, driveways should be minimized in width, allowing only for one-way traffic, whenever possible.
- Corner lots should not be used for surface parking.
- Some exemptions should be allowed for on-site parking requirements in campus retail districts. Whenever possible, parking supply should be consolidated both to use space more efficiently and to reduce the number of curb cuts required. Some spaces in these lots should be dedicated to long-term employee use only during daytime hours.
- On-street parking should be modulated with tree plantings and bump outs.



The main pedestrian connection between the business district and the campus at the intersection of University and Evans is a good model for the creation of pedestrian-oriented spaces.

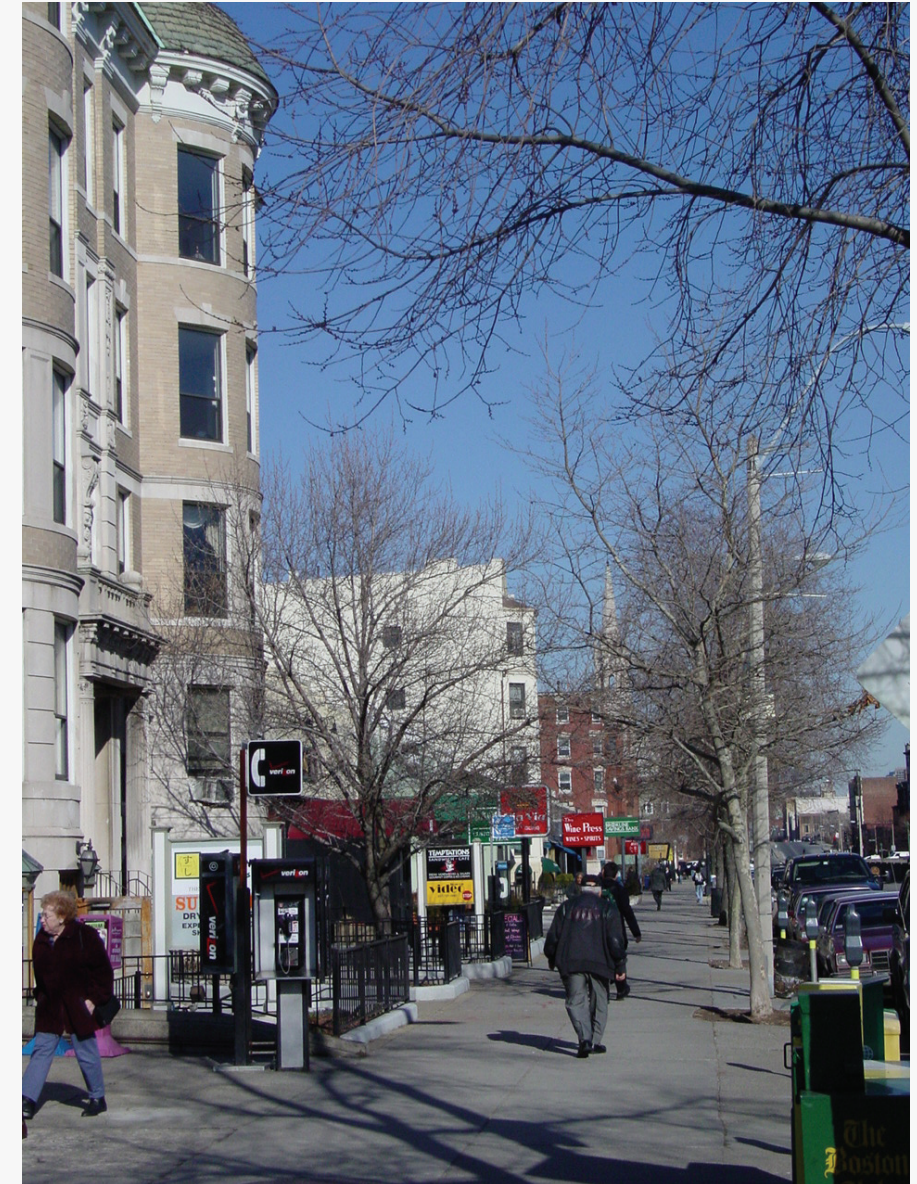


To reinforce the sense of scale along University Boulevard, buildings should be two to three stories in height, unlike the current single-story condition.

The civic fabric of Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts (right), is a good example of the energy and excitement that occurs as the campus and city mesh together. The sense of community in this example is reinforced by the mix of land uses, intensity of pedestrian activity, and the use of architectural elements to frame gathering spaces. The campus is as much a part of the city as the city is a part of the campus. The University of Denver encourages the use of its campus environs by residents of the neighborhoods and surrounding communities of Denver.



An example of a university-scale building with modulated storefronts at the street level (right). This type of building could provide significant new program for DU along University Boulevard while also adding life to the street.



Pedestrian paths can be more than just sidewalks. They can be filled with signs and other elements that, when oriented more to pedestrians than passing cars, create interesting and enjoyable places to walk.

High Street

With the fall 2006 opening of the University of Denver Light Rail Station, the completion of the UTS building and the Evans parking structure and the announcement of the Morgridge College of Education’s building, the character of High Street has begun to see the pressure for denser development mentioned in the 2002 Plan. With the installation of a traffic diverter at Wesley and the turn-around at Jewell and Colorado, along with some improvements to the intersection of High Street and Evans, substantial improvement to management of High Street traffic has been achieved. However, more work will be needed at the intersection of High Street and Evans to accommodate the anticipated increase in traffic. The Land Use Plan continues to envision High Street between Buchtel Boulevard and Evans transforming from a single-family neighborhood to a higher-density residential area. The University continues to abide by its ten year agreement of 2002 to not pursue any further rezoning of land west of High Street.

Consideration may be given to the long-term vision to replace one-story bungalows with attached townhouse residences on the west side of the street, while there will be a mix of academic and residential buildings serving the University on the east side. The hallmark will be individual building entries for each use out to the street.

Campus buildings should be predominantly 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 stories in height with sloped roof forms, domestic-style fenestration, and landscaped yards or courtyards to encourage outdoor use and activity (except for the corner “gateway” portions of the block where larger facilities are reasonable).

For neighborhood residential units (west side of High

Street), medium density units with some mixed use would be desirable. Flexible live-work units that can be used for office, studio or residential use are preferred. Townhouse or condominium units for ownership are also encouraged. Larger, apartment-style buildings would rarely be appropriate.

Site Design

- Traditional building setbacks that reflect existing residential development should be maintained. Where setbacks vary, new buildings should be within the range typically seen.
- A sense of semi-public space within the front setback should be maintained. A minimum of 50% of the front yard should consist of ground cover or low plant materials. Fences, walls, or high shrubs would not be appropriate.
- The fronts of buildings should be oriented to the street. All structures should have at least one primary entry onto the street.
- Pedestrian interest at the street level, along the east side in particular, could be achieved by providing gathering areas or architectural elements that are on a human scale (i.e., stoops, porches, etc.)
- Windows, porches, and eaves are among the elements that create patterns along a block. New construction should reflect patterns created by these existing building features.



The siting of the University of Denver Light Rail Station at the north end of High Street has been an important factor in rethinking the future land use and design of the High Street corridor.



The Fisher Early Learning Center creates an ideal architectural response to the transition in scale and massing between the campus, the neighborhood, and the local business district.



Existing single-family homes along High Street.



The neighborhood north of the Denver Country Club is a good example of the intimate relationship that can be created between street, landscape, walks, and buildings that is intended for High Street.

- Street trees should be included between the curb and sidewalk. They should be regularly spaced and planted in wells or along planting strips and along the entire length of each block.
- There should be distinction between walkways and driveways. Where the two intersect, the paving material/pattern of the walkway should be used to maintain its continuity and enhance the safety of pedestrians.
- On the east side of High Street, materials such as red brick, copper roofing, and limestone trim are characteristic of architecture on the DU campus and should be used in new construction to reinforce the image of the school.
- Landscape furnishings in a style and color of those already on campus should be used.

Scale and Massing

- The perceived scale of taller buildings over three stories should be minimized by stepping down in height towards the street and neighboring smaller structures.
- Building forms that are similar to those traditionally seen in the neighborhood should be used. These include simple orthogonal forms with pitched roofs and dormers, raised foundations, and front porches.

- Blank walls along the street edge should be avoided.

Parking

- New driveways, parking areas, and utilities should be designed and located in a way that minimizes their visual impact.
- Parking should be accessed from existing alleyways whenever possible. For lots not accessible from an alley, locate parking to the rear of the lot so that garages do not dominate facades and cars do not become fixtures within front yard setbacks.
- Corner lots should not be used for surface parking.
- On-street parking should be encouraged along the west side of High Street, but care should be taken to prevent blockage of existing residential driveways during peak demand.

Buchtel Boulevard

The high visibility of the Buchtel Boulevard district provides opportunities to significantly enhance the University’s image and presence along this important northern edge of campus. With the completion of the University of Denver Light Rail Station and the reconstruction of the I-25/University Boulevard interchange, the land between the highway and University facilities holds great redevelopment potential. The City of Denver and RTD are actively pursuing dense, transit-oriented, mixed-use development surrounding light rail stations (consistent with “Blueprint Denver,” the City’s new Land Use and Transportation Plan).

Site Design

- Streetscape enhancements should be provided along Buchtel Boulevard and its median that are consistent with other Denver boulevards, such as Speer and Monaco.
- Landscape treatments along the boulevard and within the development zone north of Buchtel should be rich in material and texture. The south side of Buchtel, however, should maintain an openness of development, capturing the park-like setting of the DU campus.

- Views to the mountains, the downtown cityscape, Veterans and Washington Parks, and the campus Promenade should be accentuated.
- Minimal setback requirements, wide sidewalks, and ground floor retail and service uses should be encouraged to respond to increased pedestrian traffic generated by the DU Light Rail Station.
- A clearly marked pedestrian and bicycle crossing of Buchtel aligned with the campus Promenade should be included. This would promote the opportunity for the campus to serve as a vital link for the community to the Light Rail Station.
- Given the importance of Buchtel Boulevard as a designated bicycle route, the number of curb cuts along Buchtel should be minimized. Continuity of both bicycle and pedestrian circulation is fundamental. Bicycle parking should be incorporated into all new construction without disrupting building access.



The Englewood Center Light Rail Station has contributed to the civic fabric of development along the southeast corridor in the Denver metro area.



The 7th Avenue Boulevard in Denver is scaled to celebrate the pedestrian experience.



At Boston University, the buildings support active street life.



Adjacent to the Englewood Light Rail Station, development has contributed a civic structure that incorporates living, working, and outdoor spaces.

Scale and Massing

- On the north side of Buchtel, the development of an urban village with high-density, active mixed-use development would be appropriate in response to the Light Rail Station as a civic structure.
- Future development south of Buchtel Boulevard within the campus boundary should be consistent in scale and use with the Ritchie Center. This facility houses destination-oriented uses and serves as a monumental public gateway to the campus, allowing for openness in the campus edge from the north.
- The southwest corner of Buchtel Boulevard and University Boulevard should accept a high-density facility. Such a facility would serve as an important architectural gateway element at the most visible entrance to the campus.
- A clear visual definition should be made between street level and upper floors through a change of materials and colors.
- A variable built edge on the south side of Buchtel is recommended to provide multiple entry points to the campus at open space connections.
- A formal consistent streetscape treatment should be designed for the length of the Buchtel corridor. Blank walls along the street edge should be avoided.
- To appropriately define campus edges, a materials palette should be developed that contrasts the core campus architectural palette with the evolving neighborhood built fabric.

Parking

- Parking in this district is supported by the Light Rail Station parking facility and the Buchtel parking structure.

South Campus

The land south of Iliff Avenue, bounded by Race Street, University Boulevard, and Harvard Gulch, continues to be envisioned to have substantial potential to accommodate academic growth for DU well into the future. While the current ownership situation in this area south of Wesley does not allow for coordinated redevelopment, the University’s recent acquisitions along York between Iliff and Wesley Avenues is leading to the planning for a new School of Engineering and Computer Science to better link the Newman Center for the Performing Arts to the well defined academic core of the campus. The University continues to look for opportunities to gain contiguous land ownership in this area.

The density of the south campus needs to be responsive to neighboring residential and open space land uses, while recognizing the potential space needs of expanding or additional academic programs. The existing facilities in this district typically conform to the city grid; however, future development should be guided by a plan to create a campus setting similar to the area around Mary Reed, University Hall, Margery Reed, and the Daniels College of Business.

Site Design

- The planning and design of open space in the district would be one of the most important structuring elements in creating a campus atmosphere. The extension of the Promenade south through the district is the first step, but other actions should be taken to ensure that the quality of open spaces in this area is refined.

- The southernmost part of the district, one-half block north of Harvard Avenue, should be developed in an open, park-like manner, respecting the street grid in the planning of open space and transportation infrastructure.
- Moving north, the district would increase in building density. Buildings would focus on the Promenade and new interior courtyards and quadrangles. The goal is to create new open space features that guide campus development.
- Closing selected north-south city streets through the district is desired to allow for the planning of large development zones. While these corridors may continue to carry infrastructure, it is important that the district not be broken into city blocks by roads.
- Strong pedestrian connections with the overall campus and through the district are imperative. With the continuation of the Promenade into the district, a valuable north-south link should be pursued. From the Promenade, east-west axes should be designed to link new facilities and the surrounding community.
- An improved pedestrian crossing of Iliff Avenue is recommended.



Informal and formal gathering spaces need to be distributed throughout the campus. Formal spaces such as the Fountain Plaza at the University of Colorado–Boulder (top) are intense gathering areas often adjacent to student life buildings. Less formal spaces can be found along some pedestrian corridors such as Appian Way at Keene State College in New Hampshire (above). In the South Campus, these more active spaces need to be adjacent to the Promenade.



Small-scale, intimate gathering spaces and lawns provide students and faculty opportunities for groups of two or three to gather in a more private setting. These spaces are also ideal for individuals to spend time on their own studying or relaxing. (Sweet Brier College Courtyard) There will be numerous opportunities to create this type of space with a redevelopment of the South Campus.

Scale and Massing

- The Promenade extension to the Harvard Gulch offers transitional development opportunities from campus to the neighborhood.
- Development on the block between Harvard and Wesley Avenues along University Boulevard while continuing the retail uses that exist today, could benefit from more pedestrian-oriented design.
- Development toward the western boundary of the district would be compatible in scale with the single-family homes adjacent to the University (similar to the Facilities Service Center).
- Building entries should focus on significant open space features, including the Promenade, quadrangles, and courtyards.
- The southern edge of the district needs to be developed with the level of openness of a public park. This treatment would provide a seamless transition from the University to neighborhood.

Parking

- Structured parking facilities should be located along York Street to reduce the impact of the vehicle in the core of the campus.
- North-south vehicular movement through the district should be restricted to Race Street and York Street.
- Vehicular circulation interior to the District would focus on the Iliff and Wesley corridors. Iliff Avenue, as a city arterial street, would continue to support a high level of traffic. Parking facilities should be located along or near the Iliff corridor.
- Careful planning could lead to Harvard Avenue being opened to run continuous from Race Street to University along the southern campus border. Attention to prevent this route from growing into a divider crossing between the park and the University is very important.

