CU-Boulder Main Campus

Design Guidelines

University of Colorado at Boulder
Office of the Campus Architect

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“Nowhere is it more essential to have the physical plant beautiful and well-knit together. Nowhere should it be more feasible to enlist the careful thought of well-trained minds to weigh and to reconcile all component parts.”

— Charles Z. Klauder, 1929
“The strength of the (Klauder’s Tuscan Vernacular) design has provided a dominant direction for the campus to the present day. Visiting the campus, one is struck with the consistency of vision. Even buildings of the 1960s and 1970s ‘brutalist’ style seem, here, to be tamed into submission to the whole.”

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Unlike most other higher education campuses around the nation, the architectural building style at the University of Colorado at Boulder has remained relatively constant since its origination in 1921 at the hand of Charles Z. Klauder. Even through the post WWII growth period and the 1960s and 1970s, the basic “Tuscan Vernacular” style has prevailed.

Further, all capital improvement projects have received intensive oversight by campus architects, and since 1964, a committed external design review board reporting directly to the President of the University. Because of this close collaboration of professionals and the inevitable scrutiny accompanying this established development process, prescriptive detailed standards for the design of buildings and grounds have not traditionally been utilized. However, the following descriptive general guidelines are suggested as valuable checkpoints along the way toward maintaining the excellent quality of the CU-Boulder built environment.

Eaton Humanities building, a 1999 addition to the campus Vernacular design palette, illustrates the commitment by the campus to the Tuscan Vernacular style while adapting to today’s programmatic requirements.

An early sketch for a proposed unbuilt women’s residence hall complex indicates the stylistic intent of architect Klauder.

The grand east elevation of the signature Norlin Library and its monumental bay window is inside the building today within the reading room of a 1980s addition.
Site and Landscape Character

Campus outdoor spaces play a major role in helping to define institutional image and the unique campus character, and to support campus activities. Quality outdoor area design has profound implications, not only for the campus’ visual appearance but also for how the university and the surrounding community relate. The outdoor designs generate how social interactions originate, how people move about campus, how inviting and safe it feels, and how the campus landscape environment contributes to the inspirational aspect of the student and faculty’s campus experience. Numerous studies have confirmed that a well-designed and maintained campus can result in increased numbers of student applicants, higher retention rates, and ultimately, greater alumni donations.

The intent of the following general guidelines is to support and guide decision making for project planning and design consultation, to ensure that any design is part of a consistent whole, and to allow maintenance and construction staff to coordinate incremental campus improvements. Emphasis must be toward sustainable, totally integrated, and holistic facilities projects. When applicable, planning for phased development of any specific site and building should occur.

A campus character often described as romantic is based on uniform architecture and building materials in a verdant landscape against an impressive mountain backdrop.

The goal is to integrate the architecture, the mountain backdrop, and the high plains landscape as one.
Guidelines

Community Interface Guidelines

Community Interface address campus corners, edges, entrances, and connections between other Boulder campuses and the city of Boulder.

- Create large-scale landscape designs at campus corners including mass plantings and clear durable functional identification signage. Consult the campus signage standards for all signage designs.

- Provide campus edge landscaping, signage, site accessories, and material selections to create a break between adjacent uses while maintaining a sense of continuity, softening views of perimeter parking lots, and improving safety for all modes of movement along the campus interconnections with the community.

- Enhance transitions to and from the campus through appropriate lighting levels, simple and functional signage, appropriately scaled plant material, and elimination of clutter.

- Link CU-Boulder properties through functional circulation systems, similar landscaping and accessories, and directional signage.

The campus corner at Broadway and University is a mix of plantings, signage, and pathways, which interface with the city of Boulder.

A busy joint-use pedestrian and bicycle path borders a variety of methods to soften internal views of the campus.

A corner wall and landscaping provide a picturesque beckoning entrance to the University of Colorado Research Park. As with all satellite locations, the main campus materials palette is used to obtain a “family” recognition.
Social Spaces Guidelines

Social spaces guidelines attempt to define how outdoor spaces are used, how often they are used, and how people transition between buildings and outdoor spaces.

- Recognize outdoor area uses by differing activity levels such as: major walks, tranquil areas for reflection and quiet activities, places to sit in both active and passive spaces, and solar orientation.

- Develop outdoor rooms (courts, cloisters, plazas, malls, etc.) to reflect use requirements for seating, solar warmth, wind protection, focal points such as fountains or sculpture, and unique character by site accessories or naming.

- Frame and screen outdoor rooms from adjacent distractions through arcades, colonnades, gateways, planting walls or appropriate screen fences.

- Create and retain large open flat lawns for a diversity of recreational and social uses. Provide shaded edges for outdoor studying or viewing activities.

- Use forecourts of buildings to accommodate both passive and active use related to the building. Include site walls to change elevation, reduce the scale of buildings, define specific outdoor areas, and provide seating.

- Designate outdoor café, meeting, and market venues near highest population densities with adequate seating, lighting, power source, and shade structures for vendors and customers.

Two teak benches and a sandstone table overlooking Varsity Lake commemorate a deceased economics professor, Reuben Zubrow. His family’s gift is a favorite spot to relax and study.

Open fields of lawn invite both casual sunning and more active recreational sports.

One of the most popular outdoor spaces for students is the courtyard outside their building, the University Memorial Center. A fountain, plus casual and formal seating is the place to be seen.
Pedestrian Area Guidelines

**Pedestrian areas** address the pedestrian experience: what they see, feel, hear, and smell — such things as walkways, nodes, views, and vistas, weather exposure or protection, resting areas, and safe movement.

- Maintain walkway widths appropriate for the anticipated volume of pedestrian traffic, but no less than seven feet for efficient snow removal. Consider other uses, such as wheelchairs, bicycles, and service vehicles. Provide generous corner radii or small plazas (nodes) where walkways intersect.

- Avoid colored concrete walkways and flagstone — except as narrow shortcut paths which have no snow removal or accessibility for wheelchairs.

- Create stopping places along walkways to observe and appreciate views, landscape, or activities along the way, incorporating seating where possible. Provide pull-off bays on joint use walks for service vehicles where needed.

- Landscape to protect walkways from strong winds and inclement weather. Orient building and other facility entrance points in consideration of rain, snow, ice, wind, sun, and shade. Strategically place all-weather shelters along pedestrian paths, major bus stops, and at pay-parking stations.

- Provide consistent directional signage at campus entrances, parking garages, major buildings, key intersections, and nodes using campus standard signage details. Include maps, event locations, disabled routing, and bicycle routes.

- Provide grade-separated crossings at major streets whenever possible. Incorporate designs with oversize widths, full access to all users, public art, and a sky-lighted interior.

A paved path across Norlin Quadrangle accommodates students coming to and from the 1999 Eaton Humanities building.

A welcome alternative to muddy paths across green lawns is a narrow masonry surface to accommodate desired shortcuts to class.

An extra-wide skylit underpass beneath Broadway links the Boulder campus with “the Hill” business district. Its walls have an integral colorful concrete mural that remains graffiti-free.

Several “you are here” informational maps are placed at locations near campus entries where newcomers can get directions and other useful information.
Vehicular Areas Guidelines

VEHICULAR AREAS address roadways and parking for cars, emergency vehicles, service vehicles, bicycles, and mass transit.

- Enhance existing streets throughout campus for safer multi-modal movement and improved appearance utilizing surfacing, lighting, signage, bicycle parking, and site accessories.
- Recognize that campus policy is to give pedestrians and bicycles priority over service and private vehicles in multi-modal areas.
- Provide facilities and amenities to encourage alternative means of travel to and from campus, such as information kiosks, bus shelters, maps, and visitor directions.
- Place generously-sized bicycle parking areas along multi-modal streets and near campus activity centers and student residence halls and courts.
- Orient bus shelters to allow sufficient views of arriving buses and to provide shelter from prevailing winter winds and snow. Include seating, trash receptacles, bus schedules, and brightly lit interiors. Use vandal resistant materials including break-resistant glazing and coated black steel structure and roof.
- Establish drop-off zones near major activity centers for convenient use. Provide seating for waiting, attractive landscaping, emergency telephones, and adequate lighting.
- Provide landscaping in and around parking lots to soften hardscape appearances from streets, break up extended rows of cars, and provide shade. Ensure adequate lighting for safe use and clear pathways from parking lots to adjacent building entrances. Design sufficient setbacks between parking lots and streets, which could include raised landscaping, berms, and/or walls to block views into the lot.
- Include loading and service vehicle parking spaces adjacent to major buildings. Screen or buffer views to service areas where possible with a combination of screen walls, opaque enclosures, gates, and landscaping. Limit service parking to designated spaces only.
- Provide raised curbs selectively along campus walkways to discourage all modes of transportation from crossing or parking on lawns or adjacent landscaping.

Upon entering the campus a variety of service vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles are provided with curbed clearly marked travel paths. Off path service parking is also provided where practical.
Landscaping Elements Guidelines

Landscaping addresses the relationship between the campus and the natural foothills landscape, campus land contours, drainage, and plantings in relation to buildings. In 1918-19, when Charles Z. Klauder created the university building style based on the buildings and landscape he saw in rural Tuscany, he included the same vertical conifers as those growing in the Boulder foothills. Today, evergreen trees, high plains grasses, and other plants of the transitional ecosystems are still a desirable counterpoint to the Tuscan Vernacular architecture.

- Use native landscape materials to the greatest extent feasible, including drought-tolerant plantings where appropriate, and the preservation of flora and fauna habitats.
- Avoid unsustainable slopes, minimize retaining walls, and utilize gradual sloping earthen berms only when necessary.
- Take advantage of existing campus irrigations systems and accompanying raw water consumption standards. Utilize the best water quality principles throughout.
- Slope sites to drain away from buildings, sidewalks, and plazas. Use landscaping to effectively control soil erosion. Design to control water runoff and storm drainage through retention/detention methods.
- Enliven campus spaces with public art, including sculpture, plazas, specialty gardens, and where environmentally feasible, water features.
- Identify and preserve beautiful and interesting view corridors of all kinds, especially to the mountain backdrop.

University owned water shares feed campus pond and rock falls replete with natural plantings. Before today’s state-of-the-art underground irrigation systems this water was used for flood irrigation of lawns through a system of concrete-lined ditches.

The recirculating water fountain at Sewall Residence Hall, above, dates from a design by Charles Z. Klauder in 1934. Fronting a south courtyard rose garden with other limestone carvings. At right, three successive holding ponds clean water runoff from the research park before entering Boulder Creek. Natural plantings throughout the area attract wildlife and pleasurable viewing from pathways.
- Plant flower beds together in quantity at points of campus entry and places of greatest people density. Use more drought-resistant plantings, naturally grouped, in areas where close inspection is not likely. Place plant materials in massed groupings without using several competing species.

- Arrange trees and other plantings to enhance building architecture and details, especially entrances, which should be fully revealed. Limit small scale plantings, such as flower beds, to principal building entrances.

- Label or otherwise identify trees, shrubs, flowers, and other planted material as a means to educate and gain appreciation for the campus landscape.

- Provide campus standardized site furniture, convenient trash and recycling containers, and other site accessories in pedestrian-friendly locations. Provide places for casual seating and benches with backs for longer term use.

- Use campus standardized lighting fixtures for pedestrian areas and for streets and parking lots. Ensure that lighting levels meet Campus Lighting Master Plan guidelines for campus walkways and building entrances.

- Provide special lighting for building fronts, walls, trees, public art, and special landscaped areas to create emphasis on focal points of interest of the night-time campus.

- Provide uniform regulatory, identification, directional, and informational signing according to existing campus standards.

Herbst Plaza, the principal east courtyard serving the Drescher Undergraduate Engineering building (ITTL), the Discovery Learning Center, and the main Engineering Center complex, is a welcome entrance both day and night.
Sustainable Community

CU-Boulder continues its long-standing commitment to the principles that establish a sustainable community — which can be defined as a place of interconnectivity of all things where attention is paid to how physical development can be sustained over time. It involves how building development occurs, land is used, transportation is managed, natural resources are respected, conservation technologies are practiced, and social and economical issues are prioritized. These design guidelines support the achievement of fiscally sound and environmentally responsible development and the wise stewardship of all campus resources.

- Support the ability to achieve the equivalent of a United States Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification status for new construction maximizing practical points of the five LEED categories.
- Monitor and document the equivalent LEED rating for major renovations, and existing building upgrades, as well as operations and maintenance, wherever possible.
- Consider inherent opportunities and constraints of the development site and space and orientation within existing campus built environments. Include special emphasis on unique Colorado geographical and environmental sensitivities.
- Address alternative transportation opportunities for new physical development to encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use. Provide supportive information signage, maps, kiosks, and shelters.
- Design facilities and building systems to save non-renewable resources through the use of substitutes, recycling, and better recovery and reuse.
- Include consideration for maintainability over time through potential benefits from building life cycle cost analyses, alternative performance systems, and other strategies at time of design and construction.
- Promote ongoing energy conservation practices, water conservation, and waste reduction.
Bicycling through Tuscany in northern Italy around the turn of the century, architects Charles Z. Klauder and Frank Day of Philadelphia admired hillside villages and rural farmhouses that 20 years later inspired their design for buildings at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

The main campus is known and admired for its uniform architectural style and building materials palette. Sandstone walls, red tile roofs, limestone trim, and black wrought iron accents are set in a verdant landscape against a mountain backdrop providing an appealing sense of stability and perpetuity. When viewed in aggregate, the campus is reminiscent of hill towns around Florence and Siena. Remarkably, the distinctive building style set among a variety of open spaces has endured despite pressure from other building styles du jour and differing ideas from architects and others through the years.

A typical Tuscan rural villa photographed in the 1920s or 30s is among a wide variety of buildings and hill towns which dotted the countryside of north Italy that inspired Frank Day and Charles Klauder toward their vision of University of Colorado architecture.

An example of the similarities between the Boulder campus and a Tuscan hill town resides in a similar climate, with similar building forms and a similar mountainous setting.
Guidelines

- Begin each new building with symmetry in plan, although asymmetrical ideas can be introduced when necessary. Use an assemblage of repeating and overriding forms for interest and economy of costs.

- Site each building or complex as a complementary insert into the campus facilities master plan. Respect neighboring structures and surrounding open spaces, including view and circulation corridors. Minimize footprints to conserve scarce building sites.

- Plan roofs that are gabled and hipped cascading down from the higher building forms to the edges of buildings. Respect the human scale, particularly at ground levels.

- Ideally, plan for a floor plate width that could capture cross ventilation and sunlight. Spread out building forms from a central core, creating pleasant courtyards and forecourts. Limit size of wall openings reflecting less need for daylight in a high plains climate.

- Emulate previous themes, but avoid direct copying. Shed, pavilion, and flat roofs over more simple forms can be added effectively to the Tuscan Vernacular style, stretching the visual experience while reflecting a contemporary functionality.

Farrand Residence Hall appears as a complex building, but in fact it has only five repeating forms attached at each corner of a single central core building.

Buildings and open space should align in ways that produce a variety of campus outdoor rooms.
Consider alterations or additions to existing buildings categorized as cherished, landmarked, or valued contributors to the Boulder campus as significant and requiring review from appropriate authorities.

To conserve campus land, construct new buildings with a minimum of four floors of usable space above grade, a fifth attic floor for mechanical space, and at least one floor below grade.

Design building entrances commensurate with building use, people volume, user convenience and shelter, and complementary in form and materials to the architecture. Elaboration is usually confined to entrances. The primary entrance must be the focal point of arrival, with proper transitioning from exterior entry terrace to interior entry space.

Enclose within roofs and attic spaces, or otherwise screen from view, mechanical and other technological equipment that often is exposed on roofs in commercial/industrial environments.

Three external additions to the original 1903 Buckingham Library occurred in 1923, 1985 and 1989. Each accommodated a new program, (fine arts, dance, theatre) and all easily fit with the campus architectural style.

The south entry court of the Wolf Law building is approached through a series of eye-appealing environmental and architectural elements.
The scale of buildings should be kept to human proportions, should be sensitive to their surrounding context; emulate, not copy, the campus Tuscan Vernacular style; and above all, use simple straight forward forms without excessive detailing.

Newly inserted campus development should reflect a family resemblance to the Tuscan Vernacular style by reference to size and scale, massing of similar forms, uniform building materials, pedestrian scale, landscaping amenities, and open space variety.

Sample walls of stone, trim, window treatment, and roofing should be constructed for campus approvals prior to building application.

With all facilities development, intelligent design choices should be considered for energy efficient and environmentally friendly projects by every practical means.

The 2005 Wolf Law building, above, presents an appearance worthy of admiration for those entering through its courtyard.

The daylighted atrium of the 2002 University Memorial Center addition, left, reflects a good interior design solution and sustainable design practice.

The mockup of the building wall on each construction site establishes the desired standard for the desired result.

Two shed structures flanking the entry to the Joint Institute for Laboratory Astrophysics (JILA) addition contains a heat pump for the Power House in one, and a transformer in the other. Innovative solutions keep faith with quality campus architecture.
The vocabulary of materials for the campus built environment is a vital element toward the consistency of design excellence. Walls of native sandstone, roofs of clay barrel tile, trim of limestone, and accents of black wrought iron make up the principal elements of this palette.

The quality of materials used in the construction of buildings, associated facilities, and site elements should be honest to their original form. Imitations to sandstone, limestone, clay roof tile, copper, wrought iron, and other natural building materials when substituted result in a compromise in quality, substance, and appearance and their use is discouraged.

The 2006 Alliance for Teaching, Learning and Society (ATLAS) building houses the center for campus technology. It is fully wrapped in the Tuscan Vernacular style except for the top of the corner tower where technology exhibits its presence.

The east entrance to the University Theatre is true to the campus palette of materials and stylistic intent.
Roof Tile Guidelines

- Specify straight barrel mission tile for all sloping roofs, a vitreous clay product, laid in a variety of styles, including mission, thatch, regular, random, cabana, and others as directed by campus staff. Sloping roofs should always be used except when unusual circumstances dictate otherwise.

- Stipulate five to six colors for the covers that lap over pans to be fired in natural and glazed weathered or non-weathered colors of light and dark reds, rose, brown, natural, and a sprinkling of buff.

- Use barrel tile on gable, hip, shed, and similar roof types greater than 3:12. Ensure that roof patterns and color schemes are harmonious with adjacent roofs whether attached or on nearby buildings.

- When flat roofs are necessary, provide sloping underlayment material to drain. Utilize light and colored ballast for flat roof applications.
Sandstone Wall Guidelines

- Obtain locally quarried sandstone through stone suppliers who stockpile custom order quantities and colors specific to each project.
- Specify colors and mix (pinks, reds, buffs, and others) that are responsive to surrounding campus buildings. Use a stain face stone wherever practical.
- Determine the pattern of laid-up walls in terms of scale and sizes of stone that reflect the magnitude of the project’s walls. Follow the general pattern and accompanying notes, at left, and at www.colorado.edu/architect.
- Lay up stone with the fractured face extending various distances from the vertical mortar wall line. Clip back ends of stone that extend well out from the vertical mortar line.
- Strike corners of walls to a straight vertical line top to bottom.
- Generally, keep stone lengths generous, always more than a foot in length and as long as practical to fit the desired pattern. Avoid any stone less than a 1:3 height to length ratio. Usually, limit stone to a 7” to 8” maximum thickness.
- Insert windows in walls to be consistent in arrangement, form, and function to this climate. Specify black window frames with limestone or sandstone heads, jambs, and sills. Select window glazing that is overall colorless with minimum tinting, especially at ground level where pedestrians circulate.
- Refer to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for further information.
Limestone Guidelines

- Use Indiana limestone as the preferred trim on campus buildings as a counterpoint to the pink sandstone walls and red tile roofs. Avoid precast concrete as a substitute whenever possible.

- Specify a surface which is planar cut followed by sanding to achieve a light honed finish. Note that both gray and buff colors are used on campus. Both age to a yellowish tint.

- Carve limestone into sculptural windows and door surrounds, lintels, coping, and other trim. Use factory skilled carvers for the more elaborate designs.

In 1999, a carved limestone cartouche was attached to the corner of the Eaton Humanities building. Its shape suggests a heart representing the humanistic programs taught in the building in a cartouche form reminiscent of others on campus.

Charles Klauder designed a beautiful rusticated limestone surround to a west entrance at the 1923 Memorial Student Union (now Economics building).
Wrought Iron Guidelines

- Specify that all lamps and lanterns, balcony rails, decorative pieces, sign posts and frames, and other steel elements are painted the campus standard warm black color.

- Use black wrought iron screen fencing in all instances as preferred standard. When alternative chain link fencing is necessary, coat with black vinyl and tack weld black metal screen on interior surface.

- Detail according to the campus standard, railings of all types used as barriers, fencing, and on steps and ramps.

- Mix a small amount of red pigment with black enamel to achieve the warm black standard color for painting all external steel elements.

A wrought iron fence between Folsom Stadium and Franklin Field establishes a barrier and game-time access to the stadium.

Above, standard campus black railings on Norlin Quadrangle border walks to curtail informal muddy paths across the lawns while not prohibiting passage for recreational use of the open space. At right, a warm black color for wrought iron is achieved by adding a small quantity of red pigment to complement the overall pink sandstone color.

Air handling equipment and transformers are discreetly fenced with wrought iron pickets backed by black mesh screening.
**Other Materials Guidelines**

- Use wood, painted steel or anodized aluminum for doors and door surrounds, windows and window trim dependant on cost, maintenance, and specific applications.

- Paint roof vent stacks, fan vents, exhaust and intake stacks not to match roof tiles but to the uniform campus standard neutral color. Paint cabinets or equipment screens, whether on roof tops or on the ground, the campus standard neutral color.

- Limit concrete site walls to 18” or less in vertical height without a sandstone facing and a sandstone or limestone cap. Never use wood railroad tie site walls.

**In Summary**

These design guidelines follow specific directives, specifications, and standards in CU-Boulder websites for Facilities Management, Design and Construction, Campus Architect, and the current Campus Master Plan.
Where the physical and academic environment supports the human psyche

The site, landscaping, and architectural design guidelines presented within are not intended to be substantially prescriptive for a specific design outcome. The intent is to define parameters within which a compatible design can be achieved. The guidelines point the project design team and the user representatives toward an understanding of the physical characteristics of a building and/or landscape design, which will be acceptable within the CU-Boulder context. Sustainable design guidelines have been included in the section under Site and Landscape Character.

The resultant campus development designs should then reflect CU-Boulder’s commitment to its tradition of design excellence, respect for its heritage, and its relationship to the surrounding region. It is a matter of interpretation, not imitation.

The 1948 Farrand Residence Hall, a design by Klauder’s successor firm, Trautwein and Howard, exhibits its place in front of Boulder’s hallmark Flatiron formation.

The fountain in Dalton Trumbo Fountain Court is a center piece attraction for the campus community.
Further information about the programmatic goals and design character of the main campus at CU-Boulder can be found in the 2001 Campus Master Plan, the Campus Architect website at http://fm.colorado.edu/architect/index.html, the 1994 book Body and Soul, Architectural Style at the University of Colorado at Boulder, the 2005 documentary DVD by the same name, UCDHSC Graduate School PhD Thesis “Contextual Eclecticism, Designing Distinctive Campus Architecture for the University of Colorado, 1917-1921.” Claire Shepherd Lanier, and various other planning and design documents on the Facilities Planning websites.

Special component plans in Lighting, Signage, Landscape, and many others are also available through the Office of the Campus Architect.

In 2005, the documentary film, Body and Soul, was released by the Department of Facilities Management. The DVD format is duplicated, boxed, and distributed for a nominal fee by the department.

All development within the CU-Boulder main campus must comply with the building construction standards, codes, and regulations as set forth in Building Construction Standards managed by the Department of Facilities Management, Office of Planning, Design, and Construction.

The 1994 book, Body and Soul, Architectural Style at the University of Colorado, has been a seminal work for the continuum of the “Tuscan Vernacular” style invented by Charles Z. Klauder.

An update of the existing Campus Master Plan is to be completed in 2008.