One designs not places, spaces or things—one designs experiences.

JOHN ORMSBEE SIMONDS
Open spaces are a critical element in the overall UW campus fabric. The historic campus core was developed around two signature open spaces, and the resulting character provides the University with its most recognizable and cherished sense of place. This chapter provides a history of the University of Wyoming’s campus master planning efforts, an inventory of the existing open space on campus, an overview of the open space system (including assets, issues and challenges) and the proposed open space network.
Open Space Planning

Open spaces are the expanses of area, from small intimate spaces, to vast, grand areas of land, located outdoors on the UW campus. Open spaces provide areas for social interaction and recreation, places to learn and study, as well as spaces for quiet reflection and meditation. Open space can also be developed to provide areas for active and passive recreation and intramural sports. While a formal hierarchy has not been defined, the campus includes a range of open spaces, including plazas, green spaces, entry courts, recreational fields and collegiate sports facilities, as well as undefined campus open space, non-campus open space and surface parking lots. Open spaces also provide other benefits such as stormwater detention, filtration and reclamation. These areas are also important as they visually enhance campus buildings, distinguish gateways and paths, and create legible places. The UW campus is fortunate to have a number of popular open spaces.
University of Wyoming
Greater University Campus
Master Plan, 1924

In 1924, Wilbur Hitchcock, along with the Denver-based landscape architecture firm of McCrary, Cully and Carhart, drafted a development plan for the future growth of the Laramie Campus: the University of Wyoming Greater University Campus Master Plan, 1924. At that time, the campus was bounded by Ivinson Street on the south, 9th Street to the west, 15th Street to the east, and Lewis Street on the north.

Planning Impetus

As early as 1909 the need for a plan had been championed by UW President Charles O. Merica. By 1920, the campus had grown from 40 to 62 acres, and three years later it had expanded further eastward to encompass a total of 92 acres. Nonetheless, there were only eight buildings on campus as of 1925. Following the Armistice, intensive development of Wyoming’s oil fields generated royalties that funded the development of a formal, long-range building plan to guide campus growth.
Key Elements

Landscape architecture was an integral component of the plan, which established the configuration of major buildings around a quadrangle of open space: a classic design employed for university campuses across America. This open space was graded and landscaped in 1928, and later came to be known as Prexy’s Pasture. It has been an important focal point of the campus ever since.

The primary vehicular entrances established in this plan include 13th Street from the south and Fremont Street from the west, and there were roadways that extended all the way around Prexy’s Pasture and connected both entrances. In addition, 10th Street extended north in front of Old Main and was connected to the internal roadway. A significant pedestrian entrance from the west was University Avenue. Of these approaches, only the entrances from 13th Street and Willett Drive remain today. The basic configuration of this plan was followed as new buildings were erected in the subsequent decades around the central open space. The plan proposed doubling the existing number of buildings on campus as well as extensions to existing buildings such as Half Acre Gym and the Service Building.
Implementation

In the early 1930s a landscape architect from Denver, S. R. DeBoer, was commissioned to make planning and aesthetic recommendations concerning future development on campus. His influence can be seen in the design of Fraternity Mall as well as the continued use of native stone. Fraternity Mall, a 22-acre tract with two groups of student dwellings separated by a central landscaped park, was not a part of the 1924 Plan, which did not go east of 15th Street.

The Great Depression reached Laramie around 1931, and new construction was temporarily put on hold until federally-administered unemployment relief programs enabled the University to construct two major new buildings between 1936 and 1938: the Arts and Sciences Building, which had been described as the Union Building in the 1924 Plan; and the Wyoming Union, on the site of planned athletic facilities. In addition, improvements were made to the grounds with landscaping and sidewalks.

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
CAMPUS MASTER PLAN, 1966

The 1966 Plan was informed by the 1965 Academic Plan enrollment projections, which were based on demographics predicted for the years 1965-1975. Facilities, including new, remodeled and removed buildings, parking lot and athletic field areas, as well as undeveloped reserve areas; were planned to support student enrollment at 8,000; 10,000; and 12,000.

Planning Impetus

Following World War II, the UW had an influx of students benefitting from the G.I. Bill. Temporary structures were erected to house students, classrooms, laboratories and administrative offices, followed by permanent structures built in the 1940s and 1950s. By 1945, the campus had expanded to 146 acres, and by 1950, to 240 acres. By 1947, the campus had grown significantly east of 15th Street and conflicts between students and cars had already begun. Campus changes during the 1950s were necessitated to
accommodate married students and students with automobiles, as well as facilities for new or revitalized academic departments such as Nursing, Law and Pharmacy. Prexy’s Pasture was improved at this time with new landscaping and a network of walkways accessing all sides of the quadrangle. During the 1960’s the University underwent another dramatic change when most of the post-war facilities were replaced with new complexes and a variety of student living quarters such as the Men’s Dormitories (Crane and Hill Halls & Cafeteria), to accommodate an unprecedented increase in the student population.

**Key Elements**

Recommendations included:

- Closure of 15th Street to automobile traffic;
- Closure of the Fremont Street entrance;
- Designation of parking and lawn areas;
- Development plans for 1970, 1973 and 1976—based on projected enrollment; and
- Planting trees along campus edges and internal roadways, as well as within parking lots.

**Implementation**

Due to the energy crisis and economic recession of 1973, as well as the inflation of the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, many of the recommendations changed or did not occur. For example:

- The University was unable to acquire the properties north of Lewis Street and instead constructed the Animal Science and Molecular Biology Facility east of the Cemetery;
- Parking needs for the campus core on West Campus were increased when the Fine Arts Building was constructed and Arts and Sciences Auditorium was not relocated to the eastern end of Fraternity Mall;
- The recreational area between Half Acre Gym and the Education
Building was replaced by a parking lot when the Lab School was not relocated; and

- The continued development of the eastern campus aggravated the pedestrian and automobile conflict on 15th Street.

Between 1965 and 1975 the eastern section of campus showed the most changes with new structures, buildings and additions. Additionally, a conscientious effort to address conflicts between pedestrians and automobiles along 15th Street began with several studies and discussion of closing the street to automobile traffic.

Planning Impetus

During the 1980’s and 1990’s, the trend towards infill in the western portion of campus and continuing development of the eastern portion continued. The campus also began to work with the City of Laramie to develop joint recreational facilities on the eastern portion of campus. The purpose of the 1991 Plan was to provide direction for continuing physical development of the campus.
Key Elements
The 1991 Plan organizes and presents a matrix of useful background information, crucial issues and development criteria. The plan identified districts or zones designated for particular uses around campus to guide future development. Academic and research facilities, residence facilities, student services facilities and athletics and recreation facilities define the primary districts of the University. A circulation framework was developed that identified major vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian routes; secondary, emergency and service vehicle routes; and existing and proposed parking areas. Another critical component of the plan was to preserve the central campus area as a walking campus. Other components include:

- Articulation of campus entries, edges, districts, circulation paths and activity nodes; and
- Addressing historic development, protection of historic qualities, sense of place and flexibility for future development.

Implementation
The following recommendations, some of which have been successfully implemented, were set forth as a result of this planning process.

- Acquire properties north of Lewis to develop the Academic Core;
- Establish an area for development of research and special facilities;
- Maintain housing in present locations;
- Redevelop the parking and circulation by closing Prexy’s Pasture to vehicular traffic as well as to through traffic on Lewis and 15th Streets;
- Preserve the major open spaces on campus and link them through direct paths;
- Develop a landscape plan that includes courtyards, gateways, art and people spaces that will enhance the architecture, aesthetics, views, exterior spaces and cultural and educational experiences on campus;
- Identify and minimize campus entries to direct and control traffic; and
- Develop a comprehensive signage system and policy.

ABOVE: Plaza on corner of Prey’s Pasture
Existing Open Space

Currently, the UW campus has a variety of different open spaces. These spaces can be natural, in an unimproved state or landscaped. Most notable are the larger and well-used spaces such as Prexy’s Pasture and Old Main Green on West Campus, and Fraternity Mall and Tailgate Park towards the south edge of Central Campus. In addition to these areas, the numerous lawns, landscaped areas and other public open spaces located throughout the campus help define buildings and accessways, while creating inviting and unique environments. Some of these areas allow for active recreation uses and events such as the athletic and recreation fields on East Campus. Other areas provide passive green space, and are along-side streets and paths used for walking or bicycling to class. Several stormwater detention basins are also incorporated into open spaces. Future campus development and transportation needs will require creation of additional open spaces, as well as improvements to existing areas.

ASSETS

The formal open spaces on campus provide a strong organizational structure for the Main Campus and westernmost East Campus. Old Main Green at the south western corner of campus provides a well defined traditional campus edge along Ivinson Street between 9th Street and Hoyt Hall and is recognized nationally as a precious amenity. The conversion of Prexy’s Pasture to pedestrian- and bicycle-only traffic transformed UW from a campus where some people walked to a truly walkable campus. Prexy’s Pasture has become a University and community destination, as well as a highly desirable space for formal and informal events. Many campus buildings have usable entry plazas and landscaping. The Classroom Building and Health Sciences Complex provide very strong examples of facilities that successfully balance entry plazas and landscaping along the 9th Street public face with relatively attractive and inviting entrances on the east sides (“backs”) of the buildings. Fraternity Mall is a unifying element for the sororities and fraternities and is used by the campus recreation program for intramural and club
sports. In addition, the recreation fields east of 22nd Street provide a model for campus-campus and campus-community partnerships.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES
There are several issues related to open space on the campus. First of all, the conversion of Prexy’s Pasture and much of West Campus to pedestrian-only has made access for elderly and disabled individuals more challenging. Many events are held at the Arts and Sciences Auditorium and there is no longer a convenient drop-off location near this and many other facilities in the campus core. In addition, many buildings are oriented towards one or two major entry plazas, often leaving multiple edges of a facility as primarily service. For example, buildings on the north edge of Prexy’s Pasture have “front” doors facing south with relatively inhospitable east, west and north edges. As a result, Lewis Street (a major access point for many campus users) is uninviting. A similar result can be observed along the backsides of the fraternity and sorority houses. The public faces of the Greek houses are oriented to Fraternity Mall, creating less attractive edges along Willett Drive and King Street. The Greenhill Cemetery provides a large open space in the middle of campus, but it also contributes to a real and perceived division of the east and west portions of campus. In addition, the perimeter fencing and location of service and storage facilities along Willett Drive contribute to an uninviting driving and walking experience along this major east-west axis of the campus. Finally, the open spaces adjacent to the Centennial Complex are poorly defined and lack adjacent uses that would help to activate the spaces.
Map 3A Existing Open Space and Path System

The University’s formal open spaces are primarily located on West and Central Campuses. Previous plans have focused on the continued development and refinement of the campus core and Prexy’s Pasture. The creation of open space within campus living areas has been intended to create spaces for students to gather and socialize. Walks and pathways within open spaces play a significant role in campus accessibility.
Map 3A **Existing Open Space and Path System**

- **Existing Open Space**
- **Other Campus Open Space**
- **Recreational and Collegiate Fields**
- **Non-Campus Open Space**
- **Walks and Pathways**
- **Campus Boundary**
- **Major Road**
- **Minor Road**

*Source: University of Wyoming*
Proposed Open Space Framework

As an organizing feature, a variety of open spaces should continue to be strategically located throughout the campus. The type of open space varies by design, size and relation to other buildings and accessways. The open space framework will be composed of a hierarchy of different spaces that range from larger, signature spaces such as Prexy’s Pasture, to smaller and more common landscaped areas between buildings. New open spaces will fill in gaps between existing facilities, provide a focal point for new clusters of buildings, and enhance and connect to existing campus open spaces. The open space system will be connected by a well defined network of paths, bikeways and streets. New buildings will frame and activate new open spaces while new pathways will lead to and through new plazas and other landscaped areas. On West Campus, new open spaces will be located within the expansion area north of Lewis Street. This area will also include multiple new active plazas, and quads as central gathering spaces. In the area south of Ivinson, there will be new courts and lawns adjacent to new buildings. The Summit View redevelopment area on East Campus will feature new open spaces and quads interspersed throughout new student housing and visitor-oriented mixed use. Central Campus will have a variety of new quads, entry courts and lawns serving as the focal point between future campus buildings.

Based on an evaluation of the existing open space system, there are five primary types of campus open spaces that form the open space hierarchy. The following provides a description of these spaces.

SIGNATURE SPACES

Signature spaces are the most well known open spaces on campus and serve as focal points for the University’s most historic and prominent buildings. These areas are best known for allowing unobstructed views of surrounding buildings and may be bordered by large or mature trees.
Signature spaces promote a sense of grandness to the campus and can be bisected by pathways that connect to opposite sides of the open space. The campus has three signature spaces: Prexy’s Pasture, Fraternity Mall and the Old Main Green.

**Prexy’s Pasture**
Prexy’s Pasture is located on the West Campus core and is a character defining element of the UW campus. The pasture is protected by the State of Wyoming with a park designation and is at the center of several iconic buildings, including the Wyoming Union and Half Acre Gym to the east; the College of Agriculture to the north; the College of Arts and Sciences to the west; and Ross Hall and the Student Health Center to the south. The pasture receives significant use and is bisected by several paths linking surrounding buildings and uses to one another. Prexy’s Pasture is rather large when compared to the scale of the surrounding buildings, but pathways and tall coniferous trees help to further demarcate and frame the space.

**Fraternity Mall**
Near the geographic center of campus is Fraternity Mall which is divided by a street into two fields, east and west. The mall is separated from West Campus by 15th Street running north and south. The mall is surrounded by a single row of fraternity houses to the north and sorority and fraternity houses to the south. To the east of the mall is the Fine Arts Center.

**The Southwest Campus Green**
The Southwest Campus Green is located at the periphery of the southwestern portion of campus. Bordered by Old Main, Williams Observatory and Hoyt Hall, the Green has street frontage along its south (Ivinson Street) and west (9th Street) edges. Like Prexy’s Pasture, the Green also has multiple pathways that bisect it, but contains many more trees of various species. The space has also been protected by the Wyoming State legislature with a no buildings designation.
Large open spaces set aside through previous planning efforts are now defined by mature trees and surrounding development and have become signature campus spaces. Major and minor quads stem from the influence of signature spaces, only on a smaller scale surrounded by fewer buildings. Entry courts and front lawn areas are created as buffers distinguishing between various feature types such as the transition onto campus property or areas for storm water detention.
Map 3B Proposed Open Space and Path System

Source: University of Wyoming
Major Quad
Major quads are smaller than the signature spaces and are activated by five to six buildings and entry courts, with access from promenades and walks. Quads are typically landscaped spaces, but can also include hardscaped plazas. The plaza above the underground Science Library Annex in the center of the sciences buildings is an example of a major quad.

Minor Quad
A minor quad is generally smaller than a major quad, activated by two to three buildings and entry courts, and accessed by promenades and walks. Minor quads can also be landscaped or hardscaped. The open space between Old Main and Merica Hall is an example of a minor quad.

Entry Court
Entry courts serve as entrances to building clusters and are typically activated by two to three buildings. Single buildings can be configured to sufficiently activate an entry court as well. These spaces are accessed by walkways and pathways. The entrance to Ross Hall is an example of an existing entry court.

Front Lawn
Front lawns are typically opposite entry courts and are activated by building entrances and street sidewalks along the campus’ frontage. These spaces are accessed by walks and often serve as bioswales or storm water detention areas. The campus’ frontage on 9th Street is an example of a front lawn.