The Evolution of the Campus

Given the historic national trends in campus design that have emphasized campus quads, sinuous paths and ornamental plantings, the founding years at KU were influenced by these trends in building and planting an oasis on a somewhat remote and windswept site. But there was a compelling reason why the Hill, the “mount,” was chosen as the site for the campus. At the same time that the ridge of Mount Oread provided sweeping views of the horizon and a prominent site for a campus, it’s also evident that Mount Oread’s barrenness was seen as a natural condition to be tamed with plantings and landscape. The resulting composition is intended as the highest quality, symbolic site for learning, the type of institutional image that is difficult if not impossible to recreate without the combination of natural features, planning and time.

The lesson relevant to campus preservation today is to understand that landscapes have been defined, interpreted and valued in various ways at different times in history. Whereas Kansas prairie was once seen as turf to be plowed under and farmed, it is now retained at KU as a remnant of the natural origins of the place in the form of Prairie Acre. Intended treatments and landscape schemes that were implemented were not always consistent. In the 1920’s, canna bulb plantings provided one of the more exotic treatments on Jayhawk Boulevard in what was otherwise a setting of “English garden” design. Designs to develop boulderred creek beds for stormwater management were proposed in Marvin Grove, then an undisturbed open space of rolling hills, mown lawn and canopy trees. Underground piping systems were installed in later decades that would not disturb the open ground plane that was characteristic of the space. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, buildings on Jayhawk Boulevard were covered in ivy, which evoked the traditional ivory tower image, but proved damaging to the building stonework and exterior. The ivy has since been removed.

It is inherent in more than a century of campus planning and landscaping that plant materials evolve, dependent upon appropriate design, care and natural conditions and these plant materials eventually decline from age or damage by pests, extremes of weather or through human intervention. As a result, the combined campus landscape aesthetic has evolved in relation to the use of sites, the use of native/indigenous materials, specific features and microclimates based on the topography of the Hill and a palette of plant materials contributed from three notable eras of planting that culminated in the height of the campus landscape during the period from 1950 to 1980. (See Appendix F for Historic Plant Material listing).
In the First Period of Development (1856-1901), the hilltop location provided broad vistas as the backdrop to the arrangement of campus buildings. The composition of building mass and landscaped spaces between buildings provided extraordinary views from Jayhawk Boulevard and the core of the campus. In this interface of site, building architecture and landscape, building entries were created, pedestrian paths established and a hierarchy of exterior spaces enhanced, using landscape treatments in the foregrounds and side yard spaces between buildings. Information gleaned from early planting plans shows that there was never an intent to block outward views and vistas but views are blocked today largely through native plant growth, infill and the construction of taller structures on the downhill slopes.

By the middle of the Second Period of Development (1902-1928), Jayhawk Boulevard had become the organizing feature of the campus development pattern, providing a more consistent arrangement of buildings and open space along the linear corridor. By the mid to late 1920’s, the Hare & Hare era planting palettes were used in the foreground and at building entries, providing a more consistent use of plant materials throughout the campus.

In the Third Period of Development (1929-1957), campus land use and planning patterns responded to the increased reliance on the automobile and growing enrollments. The expansion of the campus to the South Slope required greater attention to the issues related to accessing the top of the Hill, as parking and pedestrians were moved farther from the core of classroom facilities. Parking facilities were incrementally pushed off the top of the Hill to locations where flatter ground was more conducive to large reservoir lots, both north and south of the campus. During this period, approaches to the hilltop and stairway routes up the Hill required improvements. Construction proceeded on projects for new walks, stairs and landings with the use of plant materials conducive to holding grades, softening hard-edged retaining walls, thriving in rocky hillsides with poor soil and exhibiting spring color.

This is the overall framework that explains how the evolution of the landscape (in the broadest sense) has defined the character of this campus. The specific details of the relationships between landscapes, sites and buildings and the historic context for what remains become more evident through the narrative that follows in this chapter.

The Campus Today

The history provided in the previous chapters documents the development of the University of Kansas campus during three significant periods of growth and development, beginning in the mid 1850’s through 1957. This information provides the basis for evaluating the significance of the historic sites, landscapes, buildings and features remaining on the campus today, with the intent to make the case for preserving the best of these resources for future generations.

From the chronology of development previously presented, what are the significant features that remain on the campus today? A walk on the campus will confirm that strong connections remain between spatial relationships, views to and from sites and buildings, recognized campus features, associated cultural attributes and the cohesive qualities of the campus landscape.
The distinctive topography of the University of Kansas — the historic ridge-top campus and the accompanying hillside slopes — collectively is the most significant form and character-defining feature of the campus. Over the years, development patterns for buildings, open space, and vehicular and pedestrian circulation have been influenced by the limits of the narrow ridgeline and the steep side slopes.

In preparing the narrative for this chapter, signature historic characteristics of the campus have risen to the top as perceived “character-defining” features of the University of Kansas features that have withstood the test of time and that define the identity of KU from other campuses and remain fondly in the memories of alumni throughout the world. A summary of these features is included at the end of this chapter.

Although more limited in scope, the most significant views from and within the campus are justified as historically contributing to the campus character, in a similar way that sites, buildings and landscapes are viewed as significant and contributing. In terms of the larger composition, the views that remain today have proven to be the most independent of change on campus while still representing the earliest physical characteristics of this place.

The hilltop location of the campus on the ridge provides impressive views to the Hill from the river valleys below and views off the Hill to the distant horizon. It is rare to have a campus that can be viewed in its entirety from a distance, as was the case with the KU campus through the Second Period of Development in the late 1920’s and, to a large extent, still evident today. All along Jayhawk Boulevard and Memorial Drive, glimpses of the open views that once existed to the horizon are still evident, though largely blocked today by gradual changes over time in building development and vegetative growth. The outward view east to the horizon from 14th Street at Spooner Hall remains as impressive as it was in the earliest days. The silhouette view of new Fraser Hall, with its signature flag towers rising from the Mount Oread hilltop, creates a notable impression for those traveling on various routes to Lawrence, as the campus is visible from nearly every major approaching roadway.
The twin flags of Fraser Hall can be seen for miles away from any approach to Lawrence. Source: The University of Kansas, Office of University Relations. Image c. 2005. Jon Blumb, photographer (#101052).

Other views to the southern horizon, though limited, still remain in the corridor between Budig and Wescoe halls, from Prairie Acre and the Pi Phi Bench overlook and from the northwest corner of the Watson Library lawn. Views to the northeastern horizon are still visible from the sites of Carruth O’Leary and JRP halls on West Campus Road. However, the upper floors of many campus buildings today provide the best remaining open views to the horizon, though these building locations are not readily available to the average visitor to campus.

Fraser Hall in 2004 with Dyche Hall and the Stadium in the background. Source: University of Kansas, Office of University Relations. Jon Blumb, photographer (#100913).
The Campanile sits on the brow of Memorial Drive overlooking the green space of the Hill with views to the distant horizon.  


Many of the internal views within the campus remain intact, such as the prominent views along the Jayhawk Boulevard corridor or the inspiring view of the Campanile and the Hill from Mississippi Street, Potter Lake or Memorial Stadium. There are spatial qualities reinforced by the change in grade along the north slope, with focused views into the Potter Lake and Marvin Grove areas and larger scale vistas that encompass these features and extend across the river valleys to the north. The siting of the Campanile on the extended north brow of the ridge reinforces the significance of this topographic feature, much as the bow of a ship extends over the waves below. The Campanile provides an architectural focus within the combined open spaces of the North Slope and bowls, anchoring the magnitude of this viewshed for future generations.

The views along Jayhawk Boulevard and Memorial Drive are some of the most historically significant on campus. These are views that change seasonally, influenced by planting palettes created over the periods of KU’s development. While larger overstory trees have grown to block some views, the campus concurrently became more internally oriented along the Boulevard without a conscious effort to devalue the views from the hilltop. These views were the primary reason to put the University on the Hill ... otherwise founding groups could have tamed the prairie on the edge of South Park closer to downtown Lawrence or elsewhere entirely.

In terms of evident campus qualities today, the exceptional quality of the KU campus is directly related to the topography and the intended composition of the landscape from the three Periods of Development that are discussed in Chapter 4. The total impact of the landscaping efforts of these eras culminated in the peak composition of the mature campus landscape from a period in the mid-1950’s to the early 1980’s. The campus took on a quality that included extensive plantings intended to deliver a year-round, high quality, landscaped environment with the backdrop of views to the river valleys. While individual landscapes are noted for their historic contributions to the buildings and open spaces nearby, it is the sum of these efforts that has created the acclaimed beauty of the campus landscape of today. Because the campus is generally perceived in its entirety rather than as individual sites, the campus landscape warrants restoration treatments that are conducive to the whole.

It has become evident throughout this study process that the landscapes, topography and viewsheds of the campus significantly define this place that is known as the University of Kansas. The question now is to address how these features are managed in the future. This is one key to understanding the best representation of campus heritage and creating a plan for maintaining it.
In the course of the work on this Campus Heritage Plan, the opportunity to take periodic tours of the campus revealed the complexity of the campus as historic resources were identified and inventoried. The contribution of the historically significant features of KU may best be explained by providing the narrative version of a campus walking tour that highlights and emphasizes characteristics of existing sites, buildings, landscapes and specific features based on their historic connections.

While significant historic buildings are briefly mentioned within this discussion, additional information on campus buildings may be found in Chapter 7. Additional discussions of specific landscape zones and treatment recommendations are included in Chapter 6 and in Appendix E.

**Jayhawk Boulevard:**

The single most noteworthy designed site feature on the campus is the development of Jayhawk Boulevard. While the origin of the design dates back to plans provided by George Kessler in 1904, the unchanging topography of the ridge and the need for circulation and adjacent buildable sites for academic buildings provided the basic linear pattern for the extension of the core campus.

In the earliest Period of Development, what would later become Jayhawk Boulevard was little more than a dirt path extending west from 14th Street, crisscrossed by pedestrian walks. The path was a remnant of a branch of the Oregon Trail that continued on to the west along the ridge top. The extent of the early street ended at Bailey Hall, where a hedge separated the campus from the cattle pastures beyond.

The Kessler plan proposed the extension of a formal promenade or boulevard west, with the composition of streets and buildings heavily influenced by the architectural design showcase and the pedestrian and vehicular concourse he had designed for the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. Kessler’s plan presented a grand scheme for the “University on the Hill,” with building sites and circulation responding to the topography of the narrow ridge line. Perhaps the limits of geography and buildable sites provided most of the definition, but the design intent is still evident today. The plan was further refined in the Hare & Hare 1928 “General Plan for the Campus.”
From the earliest plans, Jayhawk Boulevard was envisioned as the primary vehicular route of the core campus. Consistent landscape treatments and setbacks for the buildings along the Boulevard have created a unifying effect along a streetscape of mixed architectural styles. The pedestrian character of the Boulevard provides a unifying element to the core campus, as witnessed during any class change period today. For the traditional campus experience, the travel between buildings for classes occurs now as it has since the early 1900’s along Jayhawk Boulevard. The design of the street alignment provides opportunities for sidewalks, entry lawns and landscapes, and notable features, while supporting a variety of architectural styles and building façades, open views across lawns, and limited viewsheds between buildings. The sites adjacent to the Boulevard are bounded by more traditional and historically contributing buildings of the campus, including Watson Library, Stauffer-Flint and Bailey halls, Strong Hall, Budig Hall (old Hoch Auditorium) and Snow and Marvin halls.

In the 1920’s, Jayhawk Boulevard was lined with American elm trees that formed majestic canopies over the street for decades to follow. Beginning in the 1970’s, the elms were gradually lost to disease, dramatically altering the appearance of the Boulevard. Today one elm remains along the street in front of Stauffer-Flint. Despite the changes in the tree canopy and the encroachment on the established building setbacks (with the early 1970’s construction of Wescoe Hall), the Boulevard continues to define the primary pedestrian corridor for the historic campus.
The Dyche Hall and Spooner Hall Gateway:

In the historic core of the campus, where the oldest remaining buildings stand today, the siting relationship between Dyche Hall and Spooner Hall still evokes the “gateway” intent of these buildings from the earliest campus era. These buildings front on Oread Avenue, which originally was a path to the site of the first University of Kansas building, North College, where GSP-Corbin residence halls now stand. When these buildings were designed in the First Period of Development, campus planning followed the conventions of the time in placing buildings around a central quad or lawn, which was the grand lawn east of old Fraser Hall at KU.

In terms of campus composition and building significance, these two facilities housed the earliest decades of the institution. Dyche Hall is a Venetian Romanesque-style building that opened in 1903, built in part to house the taxidermy specimens that Lewis Lindsay Dyche exhibited at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Spooner Hall, the oldest surviving building on campus, opened in 1894 to serve as the library and later as museums of art and anthropology. Spooner is a distinguished example of Romanesque Revival style architecture. Dyche and Spooner halls were both listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Their contribution to the historic campus context is significant and the Environs reviews in Chapter 7 suggest an expanded review boundary that would be more appropriate for the actual viewsheds impacting these structures.
Adjacent to Spooner Hall is Weaver Court, a notable landscape feature and sculpture garden dating from the early 1950's. The courtyard is enclosed by a wrought iron fence sitting high on a retaining wall of Oread limestone. Restoration of this campus feature to its original design intent is recommended. Adjacent to Dyche Hall at the terminus of 14th Street is a gift from the class of 1915 that serves as a map case and information kiosk. Repair and restoration of this feature is also recommended. For both Dyche and Spooner halls, a building restoration program is recommended that would first include the completion of Historic Structures Reports for both buildings and then stabilization of these buildings. Particular care will be needed to determine appropriate treatments for the deteriorating red sandstone exterior of Spooner Hall. Refer to Chapters 7 and 8 for details.

The Dyche-Spooner area maintains significance today for both the value of the individual buildings as well as the site relationships with the historic 14th Street entry and stone wall on the south, which served as an entry feature to the east lawn “quad” and open space surrounding old Fraser Hall. Today, the Spooner and Dyche sites offer some of the most extensive views from the top of Mount Oread to the east, to the west toward Marvin Grove and northwest to the Kansas River valley.
Lippincott Hall and the Mississippi Street Terrace:

Lippincott Hall (old Green), constructed in 1904, was a core campus building from the early Second Period of Development that was sited in relation to the curve of the extension of the road from 14th Street (the original campus entry) to what is now Jayhawk Boulevard. Instead of placing Lippincott on the city’s traditional grid system, which was the alignment for the earlier buildings of Old Fraser, Dyche and Spooner halls, Lippincott’s footprint and entry stairs responded to the topography of the site and addressed the future alignment of Jayhawk Boulevard. The gently terraced landscape to the west and north of the building is one of the few relatively undisturbed landscapes from the early campus era and is notable for the sensitive transition in grades from the higher elevations of Mount Oread along Jayhawk Boulevard down to Mississippi Street. The original northwest façade of Lippincott Hall provided a prominent colonnade that was evident when arriving to campus by way of Mississippi Street, though this facade is now hidden by a later building addition. Views from the site of Lippincott and the terrace toward Marvin Grove and beyond to the Kansas River valley are among the best on campus. Opened in 1905 to house the law school, Lippincott Hall is an example of the Greek Revival style and was listed on the NRHP in 1974.
Watson Library Lawn:

The open space of the Watson Library lawn has evolved significantly over time. Shown as a limited pedestrian quad in both the 1904 Kessler plan and the 1916 Hare & Hare plan for the Eastern Portion of Campus, what is now the open lawn in front of Watson Library was initially occupied by old Fraser Hall (demolished in 1965), old Snow Hall (demolished in 1934) and a temporary structure to serve as a cafeteria (destroyed by fire in 1943). During these early years, the space at the north entry of Watson was comprised of a small lawn connecting the west entry of old Fraser Hall and the adjacent buildings.

The open lawn of today was not fully realized until the demolition of these buildings and the construction of new Fraser Hall in 1967. Today, the foundation for old Fraser Hall, a notable archeological site on campus, remains just beneath the surface of the lawn to the west of new Fraser Hall and is evident during periods of drought when the browned grass within the area outlines the location of the shallow stone foundation. Historic tree surveys have identified several specimens that remain today from the original plantings around old Fraser.

Though areas within this open lawn space still maintain landscape materials from various periods of development, the treatment of this open space has been in transition since the mid 1880's. The extent of changes due to building demolition and the age of planted materials would suggest that no single landscape treatment for this open space is particularly noted and restoration is not particularly viable. The exception to this would be the plantings along the north façade of Watson Library, notable in their composition of conifers and ornamentals. A historic feature of the lawn in front of Watson Library is the Hare & Hare-designed stone sign wall and benches, a gift from the class of 1931. As with many class gifts, the sign wall is in need of repair and rehabilitation.

The 2002 Campus Landscape Master Plan recognized the importance of maintaining this open lawn as a campus green space and recommended a continuous, open treatment plan for the green space of the Watson lawn in combination with the lawn between Stauffer-Flint and Bailey halls. In terms of preservation concerns, the palette of materials selected will be an important decision, and the placement of plantings will need to address historic features such as the footprint for old Fraser Hall and maintain the significant views across this space.
Bailey Hall and Stauffer-Flint (old Fowler Shops):

The site selected for Bailey Hall along what was the west property line of the KU campus in 1900 may have reflected a desire of the time to locate the chemistry building at a distance from other campus buildings for safety reasons. Along with the terraced landscape to the west of Lippincott Hall, the green space between Bailey and Stauffer-Flint halls has remained relatively free of development over time and today remains a valued open space in conjunction with the Watson lawn to the east. Plantings from the area of Marvin Grove originally extended up the slope and across the open space between these two buildings, with vestiges of the original plantings evident today. However, the site today reveals little of its history with past campus activities, having served early in the 1900’s as the site for the trolley stop and the campus parade grounds for military training of students.

Bailey Hall was built in the Collegiate Gothic style of native Oread limestone quarried on site. The numerous original chimneys on the building were removed during a renovation in the 1950’s. Bailey Hall was listed on the NRHP in 2001. Stauffer-Flint, originally constructed as the old Fowler Shops building, is an excellent example of early Prairie-style influenced design. Both buildings have red roofs, although the materials used over the years have included both red painted metal and tile.
**Strong Hall:**

The site of Strong Hall was originally envisioned as the centerpiece of the Kessler and Hare & Hare plans, with a strong axial sight line extending north to the stadium area. Strong Hall was originally constructed with the main entrance façade on the north side of the building, with the site extending out onto the brow of the ridge (where the Campanile currently stands) and commanding the significant view to the green space below. With the construction of the Spencer Research Library directly north of Strong Hall in 1968, the axial alignment to the north was lost and a later terrace and parking deck addition were constructed between the two buildings. The south façade of Strong Hall facing onto Jayhawk Boulevard then became the primary entrance.

The front lawn of Strong Hall is significant for the formal sidewalk design and planting plans of Hare & Hare and W.D. Durrell, combining a mix of deciduous and evergreen plant materials to frame and formalize the lawn space. Strong Hall is a remarkable Classical Revival-style building that was listed on the NRHP in 1998.

This contemporary view of the front of Strong Hall shows the remnant of Hare & Hare’s plantings from the 1920’s as punctuated by the tall Scotch pines most likely installed by W. Donald Durrell, who served as a KU instructor in botany from 1939-1941. Durrell’s name appears on planting plans for this area that are now housed in the Spencer Archives. The balance of planting beds and overstory trees lends a structural formality to this prominent area. Unfortunately, many of the pines have recently been lost to blight.

Hare & Hare and the greening of the campus:

The impacts of the Kansas City landscape architecture and planning firm of Hare & Hare were evident throughout the campus with their plans for plantings and site development from 1916-1946, the date for their last known work, “Study for Memorial Drive.” A listing of the known Hare & Hare plans is included in Appendix H. Though only vestiges of their plantings remain today, Hare & Hare introduced the concepts at KU for blended combinations of deciduous and evergreen plant materials within the designed landscape to provide year-round color impact. These concepts were continued with the work of W.D. Durrell c. 1938 for Strong Hall, with the work of Alton Thomas in the 1940’s through the 1970’s throughout the campus and continue today with current landscape planting recommendations. This mix of plant materials and the maturity of the established plantings are the basis of much of the beauty of the landscape that alumni frequently refer to in their memories of the campus.

The planting schemes that were once abundant on the campus, however, have deteriorated over time because of age and damage from disease, storms, insects and maintenance equipment. Timing is now critical to address the restoration of trees and significant landscape plantings on the campus as part of a comprehensive campus tree management program. From the initial loss of elm trees in the 1970’s to the major loss of pine trees in the 1990’s, the campus is now experiencing yet another wave of significant pine tree losses. It is critical to begin restoration work now, as new plantings will take 10 to 20 years before they will provide the appearance of a mature stand.
**Walking Tour of the North Slope**

**Marvin Grove, Mississippi Street and the Stadium:**

Maintaining its original alignment today, Mississippi Street served as the original “service” entrance to the campus from the town, likely because it offered the gentlest slope to travel to the top of the Hill. The street also provided access to the stadium area, originally acquired c. 1890 for the construction of McCook Field on relatively flat and easily leveled land near the campus and later developed in 1921 for Memorial Stadium. From 1910 until 1933, the city’s street trolley delivered campus visitors up this slope to a trolley stop in the lawn between Stauffer-Flint and old Robinson Gymnasium (now the site of Wescoe Hall).

Marvin Grove, planted in 1878 primarily as a walnut grove, remains relatively undisturbed as the most important surviving planted landscape feature on the campus today and may be eligible for nomination to the NRHP in its own right. Currently in decline, the grove is in need of immediate attention to re-establish the tree canopy as part of a comprehensive forestry management program. Such a program should include an inventory and condition analysis of the current grove plantings, a study of the relationships between the current trees and the original planting patterns, identification of appropriate species for new plantings in order to provide sustainable diversity from the original single-species plantings, and recommendations for maintenance procedures to maintain a thriving grove for generations to come.

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**North Slope properties individually eligible for listing on the NRHP:**

- Memorial Stadium
- Marvin Grove
- The Campanile (confirm)

**North Slope properties eligible for district listing on the NRHP:**

- Carruth O’Leary Hall
- The Campanile Hill
- Potter Lake
- The Class of 1943 Recreation Area
**Potter Lake:**

Today viewed as a portion of the larger continuous green space of Marvin Grove and the Campanile Hill, the area including Potter Lake is among KU’s most important and potentially NRHP-eligible designed historic landscapes as a contributor to a potential district. Originally constructed in 1911 for fire protection for the University, Potter Lake quickly became a recreation destination throughout the seasons for swimming, boating, sledding and ice skating. While swimming is no longer allowed, the area remains a significant year-round green space for passive recreation and a major destination for sledding in the winter. Periodically, the lake, shore and dam have been maintained by draining and dredging; this sort of treatment may help to restore water quality. In addition to the water feature, nearby plantings and small groves of pin oaks and overstory trees bring more of a naturalized quality to the area.

Today, the unique topography of the “bowl” configuration for Potter Lake provides a pastoral setting away from the bustling campus that exists only yards away. On the slope to the west of Potter Lake, the Class of 1943 provided the funding for the dance pavilion, stone benches, walls and grills as a WWII-era social setting for dances. The area is now rarely used and in need of extensive restoration work as a significant cultural landmark for the campus, which may be eligible for inclusion within an NRHP district nomination. Areas adjacent to the north have recently undergone significant development for parking expansion (which also requires better access to the core campus) and places the pavilion on a pedestrian route that will only improve visibility of the site. The pavilion and picnic grounds are an excellent example of a forgotten historic campus feature that may be able to find new life through events associated with Memorial Stadium. To accomplish this, the area will need to be restored, plantings re-established and ADA compliant access provided.
The Campanile Hill and Memorial Drive:

The vision of the Kessler plan of 1904 and the Hare & Hare plan of 1928 for the open “park lands” of the North Slope and bowls on either side of the Campanile Hill came to further fruition with the construction of Memorial Drive in the late 1940’s. Both plans identified significant green space to occupy the land between the top of the ridge and the stadium district to the north. In the Kessler plan, the north-facing slope served as a formalized entry, lined by double rows of evenly spaced trees and flanked on either side by more naturalized parkland areas, including the established walnut trees of Marvin Grove.

The Hare & Hare Plan provided a wider variety of treatments with the overall goal to provide outdoor space suitable for a respite from the pressures of academic life on the Hill. Their plans identified the open space patterns found today in the valued green spaces of Marvin Grove, Potter Lake and the Campanile Hill. These spaces serve not only as a planted feature available to the campus but also as a park space for Lawrence community members. In the late 1940’s the construction of the actual road for Memorial Drive opened up the views to this area of the campus to vehicles. Remnants of plantings along Memorial Drive from the 1940’s and 1950’s by campus landscape architect Alton Thomas remain today, though with a declining number of flowering trees and shrub masses along the forested slopes west of Potter Lake and between Memorial Drive and Jayhawk Boulevard. Recent development needs for the modern campus have interjected parking lots and additional athletic facilities in the areas closer to the stadium. The University will be challenged by future choices that will require weighing the value of additional higher density development projects versus the value of the limited historic green space that remains.

The ceremonial “Walk Down the Hill” and into Memorial Stadium, which began for commencement ceremonies in 1924, remains one of the top traditions on the KU campus today. Though the tradition predates the existence of the Campanile, the tradition was modified with the completion of the bell tower to allow graduates to walk through the base of the Campanile in 1952 on their walk down the Hill.
Walking Tour of the South Slope

The South Slope:

Providing a location outside of the historic academic core for the service facilities of the early campus, the South Slope of Mount Oread originally housed the early utility and support functions. The newer power plant that was constructed in 1923 remains in service today. Access to the service core originally came from the flatlands on the east side of Mount Oread and up the South Slope, along the alignment of today’s Sunflower Road, on a path that is thought to be a branch of the Oregon Trail.

Further west, building construction for Lindley Hall, Broadcasting Hall and Military Science began in earnest in the early 1940’s in response to the preparations for WWII. Following the war, building efforts focused on providing housing for the influx of soldiers returning to campus on the G.I. bill and only a few academic buildings were constructed during this time, including new Fowler Shops, Malott Hall and Murphy Hall on the South Slope. These building efforts in the 1940’s and 1950’s began the transformation of the South Slope from a service support area to an extension of the academic core of the campus and created additional demands for parking and pedestrian access from the south.

The primary campus preservation concerns related to the development of the South Slope are the preservation of pedestrian corridors and green space and the selection of a plant palette that appropriately represents hillside treatments and traditional heritage plantings for this portion of the campus. The Landscape Master Plan has identified a plan for the development of the Mid-Hill Walk, an ADA compliant pedestrian corridor to provide an east-west path halfway down the South Slope that would relieve congestion on Jayhawk Boulevard and improve cross-campus circulation. If completed with indigenous stone work and appropriate contemporary versions of historic planting schemes, this project would provide an opportunity to establish a plant palette for the route and re-establish appropriate plantings at building entries.
Prairie Acre:

Located at the east end of the South Slope, Prairie Acre is one of the first campus prairie restoration sites in the country. Dedicated in 1934, the site is individually eligible for nomination to the NRHP for its association with campus life in the 1930’s, the general growing awareness of regional character during that time and its continuity since pre-European settlement as a relatively undisturbed setting. Views to the Wakarusa River valley remain intact from this site today. Located uphill from this site, the Pi Phi Bench between Twente Hall and Blake Hall provides an additional overlook site to the valley, though limited today by vegetative growth.

Recommendations include a restoration program for Prairie Acre and interpretive information related to the paths that climbed the Hill in this location and were part of the network of trails associated with the Oregon Trail. For the areas overlooking Prairie Acre, the management of volunteer trees and brush is recommended to open up stunning views to the Wakarusa River valley that would have existed from the earliest days of the institution.
Walking Tour of the East Slope (Scholarship Halls)

The East Slope of the campus is comprised primarily of the Chancellor’s home (the Outlook) and the scholarship halls of the University. The area maintains a distinctive flavor for smaller scale, quality housing for students. Beginning with the construction of the Outlook in 1912 and Watkins Residence Hall in 1926, the East Slope has continued to add scholarship residence halls, with several that are individually eligible for listing on the NRHP.

The main concern related to site preservation is the need to remove volunteer trees that obstruct the views from new Fraser Hall toward the east. These views are representative of those from the earliest period of the campus with the original tracts acquired by KU.

East Slope properties individually eligible for listing on the NRHP:
- Battenfeld Hall
- Sellards Hall (more study necessary)
- Watkins Scholarship Hall
- Miller Scholarship Hall
- The Outlook (Chancellor’s Residence, the Watkins House)
- Robinson Barn (525 W. 14th Street)
- Crawford Community Center (Strait House)

East Slope properties eligible for district listing on the NRHP:
- Pearson/Douthart Halls
Located on the site of the first building for the University of Kansas (old North College, 1866), North College is an eight-acre site, isolated by several residential blocks from the main campus. The site is currently home to Corbin and GSP residence halls for women. Corbin Hall, built as the University’s first residence hall in 1926, contributes to the overall character of the campus and would be eligible for district listing on the NRHP.

There are several historically significant elements associated with this site that should be considered for additional research and interpretation, including the original site of North College and the location and configuration of the historic student fire ring used for bonfires and other early campus rituals.

A 2008 view of Corbin Hall.

Photograph by study team.
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

The Campus Encircling the Ridge

The liberal arts campus emerges on Mount Oread in this 1896 panoramic view taken in a southward view from the old water tower on Oread Avenue.

Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

The Mount Oread ridge, visible for miles, was the first major topographic feature seen by pioneers on the Oregon Trail as they crossed the Wakarusa River to the south of Lawrence. Today, with its spreading wing-like hillsides, the topography of Mount Oread is the single most distinguishing feature of KU’s landscape; the University would be a wholly different place if built upon flat ground without outward views to the river valleys.

Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.
A 1993 view of the campus skyline showing the grade change along the North Slope.
Source: University of Kansas, Office of University Relations. R. Steve Dick, photographer (#100602).
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:
The Boulevard Campus, A Rhythm of Grand Buildings and Outward Views

George Kessler, one of America’s greatest park system planners, introduced a boulevard scheme for the campus in 1904. Although his period of work with the University was limited to this single plan, his vision for the campus transformed it from a 40-acre 19th century college to a grand campus on the hill expressing ideals of the City Beautiful movement.

Kessler integrated roads with topography to site streets and buildings to open broad vistas. Today these views, from Memorial Drive and outward from the buildings along Jayhawk Boulevard, help to define the campus experience. These views are a campus resource that should be protected from long-term encroachment.

This late 1920’s photograph taken atop old Fraser Hall is an expression of KU’s visual connection with the views to the distant horizon. The roofline of Lippincott Hall can be seen through the iron work on the lower right.
Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

A 1997 view with new Fraser Hall in the background and views to the Wakarusa River Valley to the south.
Source: The University of Kansas, Office of University Relations, Doug Koch, photographer (9/2001).
Jayhawk Boulevard, as the organizing “spine” for the campus structure, is distinct among virtually any major university in the country. It is both a linear outdoor room and a major circulation system for vehicles and pedestrians. Buildings are oriented to the Boulevard and it is routinely filled with crowds of students, faculty and staff on a daily basis.

This 2008 view, taken from the upper floors of Fraser Hall and looking across Jayhawk Boulevard into the Mississippi Terrace and Marvin Grove, reinforces the importance of visual connections between the core campus along Jayhawk Boulevard and the green spaces of the Terrace and Grove during the 19th century and today.


The internal views into Marvin Grove are especially beautiful during the spring.

Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

Site Grading, Entries and Slopes

One of the most brilliant aspects of the University’s site planning and design is found in the grading and siting of buildings in response to the slopes of Mount Oread. In the 19th century, coming to campus by carriage, especially in the winter or the muddy spring, could be a great challenge. Historically, both Mississippi Street and 14th Street (adjacent to Spooner Hall) were likely the most accessible entries from downtown. Yet, as the campus grew, buildings were sited to the west along the ridgeline, creating new access points along the new Jayhawk Boulevard.

Work, possibly resulting from the 1904 Kessler plan, created a smooth and gentle grade for Mississippi Street, which was bordered by an elegant green space to the west of Lippincott Hall, with sharply defined and consistent grading from Jayhawk Boulevard down to Mississippi Street and Marvin Grove. The rhythm of designed hillsides and the siting of buildings and streets should be protected from future alterations, such as the widening of streets or the addition of new features to the green space.

During the 1940’s and 1950’s, the campus became a horticultural showplace. Mississippi Terrace remains a premier example of the importance of consistent slope grading with clearly delineated curbs, edges and sidewalks. This view shows a colorful iris garden along the defined slope c. 1940’s.

Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

This photograph from the 1940’s shows the smooth transition of the graded slope into the graceful curve of Mississippi Street. Note how sidewalks, road alignments and slopes all work together as a whole.

Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

The Red Roofs of KU

Beginning with the earliest campus buildings of Spooner and Dyche halls, the red roof tradition has been maintained at the University of Kansas. Prominent from the east, the red roof and flags of Fraser Hall greet those traveling to the University.

The red roof tradition of the campus is evident in this 1994 image. Fraser Hall (left) and Dyche Hall (right). Source: The University of Kansas, Office of University Relations. David F. McKinney; photographer (#101239).
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

Architecture

There are many significant buildings on the KU campus. Some, like Boston-designed Spooner Hall, are significant as examples of high-style architecture. Others, like the locally designed and engineered Mud Hut (Broadcasting Hall), which was constructed in part using New Deal funds during the Great Depression, are significant because they interpret important periods of history. Still others, like Bailey Hall, are significant for their association with key persons or events. The buildings on the KU campus represent a wide range of historical periods, architectural styles, materials and design trends. Together, they tell the story of the development of campus within the context of evolving construction techniques and trends in campus design.
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

Gardens, Lawns and the Ornamental Campus

Beginning in 1916, the noted landscape architects Hare & Hare developed planting plans for Jayhawk Boulevard, Strong Hall, Fraser Hall and other campus landmarks. Today vestiges of these clusters of pines and foundation plantings remain. This tradition should be continued with sustainable and appropriate species that are available today. The campus has historically been adorned with benches, statues and, in the 1940’s, sloping iris beds that flowed along the curved walkways of Jayhawk Boulevard. During the 1950’s and 1960’s, Eleanor Malott (wife of Chancellor Deane Malott) and her garden club raised money and planted flowering crabapples in several areas of campus, including West Campus Road, Potter Lake and Irving Hill Road. The lasting effect of the generations of goodwill is an ornamental and elegant campus with a fragile vegetative character that must be maintained and renewed over time.
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

Wooded Slopes and Bottoms

The slopes of Mount Oread were anything but wooded when the campus began. Yet, through years of intentional planting that began with Chancellor Marvin’s first community projects in 1878, the campus has increasingly become more forested. Today, Marvin Grove, Potter Lake and much of the slope between Jayhawk Boulevard and Memorial Drive are blanketed with diverse plantings and volunteer vegetation. Yet, long-term stewardship of these campus forests is needed to build species diversity and to maintain their hardiness over time. Future management should also consider ground layer wildflowers, shrubs and vines that create habitat and color.

Like the Grove itself, these immersive woodland settings are unusual for an American campus and express the drive to create a forest on Mount Oread during the First Period of Development (1856-1901). Originally planted as a walnut grove in the 1870's, Marvin Grove’s early appearance was that of a young forest with little understory vegetation and informal tufts of grass. By the 1920’s, Marvin Grove provided a more open and pastoral setting with rolling lawns of grass leading the eye outward to the stadium area.
Defining Features of the Historic KU Campus:

Stone Buildings and Walls

Regional quarries, including those located along Mount Oread, have historically supplied stone for buildings and the characteristic walls found on the campus. Today the campus contains a rich variety of limestone in varying hues and textures. Because of Mount Oread’s slopes, stone retaining walls were an essential site element, implemented as early as the construction of old Fraser Hall in the 1870’s, to create flat grades for lawns.

The historic Lilac Hedge at old Fraser Hall expressed the stone wall tradition, creating an enclosure for the gently sloped east lawn and screening the hitching posts on the path below, long gone along what is known today as Lilac Lane. Later projects, such as the entry signs to Memorial Drive designed by Alton Thomas in the early 1950’s, continued this KU tradition with the use of finely crafted regional stone.

A landmark feature of the campus’s First Period of Development, the lilac hedge reflected the linearity of campus retaining walls as shown in this 1882 view of old Fraser Hall taken from the current site of Spooner Hall.

Source: University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.
Stone detailing abounds throughout the campus.

Shown in this contemporary photograph, the dry-laid Oread limestone wall at the east entry to Memorial Drive is an example of the influence of landscape architect Alton Thomas after WWII. This tactile wall’s relative informality contrasts with the more precise masonry seen in various locations on campus, such as the retaining walls near the entry to Spooner Hall.

Wall detail at Spooner Hall.
Photograph by study team.

Above, a vestige of the old Brynwood estate landscape, this retaining wall along 14th Street near Spooner Hall expresses the hillside character of the campus at one of its most important entries during the 19th century.
Photograph c. 2007 by study team.

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Photograph c. 2007 by study team.