

# 1. Overview

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the campus landscape plan is to guide the preservation, enhancement, and care of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) landscape. The plan will serve the university and Fairbanks community for many years to come. It is specifically addressed to campus decision-makers, project designers, maintenance staff, landscape volunteers, and the greater community of Fairbanks. The intent is to provide an overall framework and set of design guidelines for the entire 2,250-acre site to ensure that all future decisions affecting the landscape—regardless of scale—contribute to a unified vision of the campus.

The landscape plan follows the 2002 UAF campus master plan and is meant to work in concert with both the master plan and the UAF Design Standards. It is one of a number of actions identified by the master plan to achieve the vision of “an attractive and well-ordered campus that takes advantage of its unique northern location.”

The rugged topography of the UAF campus offers spectacular views of the distant Alaska Range across miles of boreal forest that contrast with meadows and agricultural fields to give the campus its openness and distinctive northern look. Restoring and highlighting these attributes within the built campus—the 229 acres within Tanana Loop—is central to the plan.

The plan defines **landscape** to include all the major elements of outdoor space—circulation routes (roads and pedestrian walks), parking lots, outdoor gathering areas (plazas, malls, courtyards, open space), site furnishings (seating, trash receptacles, lighting), walls, and plants (trees, shrubs, groundcover, grasses, annual and perennial flowers).

The physical environment of the campus—and the landscape, in particular—makes a powerful first, and lasting, impression and can play a key role in recruiting and retaining students, faculty, and staff. A study funded by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that for 62 percent of prospective students, “the appearance of the grounds and buildings was the most influential factor during a campus visit”—a result borne out by subsequent studies.<sup>1</sup> In undertaking the landscape master plan, UAF confirms its commitment to creating



*The trees and landform at the Museum/NSF Open Space exemplify the remarkable beauty of the Interior Alaska landscape.*

<sup>1</sup> “STUDENT ENROLLMENT, Recent Study Reveals Facilities Impact,” Dave Jackson, University of Iowa Facilities, Services Group, June 1, 2001, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~fusfsg/admin/study.htm>.



a collegial and attractive environment that supports the university’s mission, and acknowledges the importance of the landscape in giving order and continuity to the campus.

An Ad Hoc Campus Landscape Subcommittee (CLS) of the Master Planning Committee — composed of faculty, staff, and community members knowledgeable about the campus landscape—has guided development of the landscape plan. The following design principles, consistent with the goals and actions of the 2002 campus master plan, were established by the Landscape Subcommittee and underlie the framework and guidelines of the landscape plan.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The landscape should:

### **1. Restore features of the indigenous natural environment and integrate ornamental species**

The unique qualities of the UAF campus—located at the edge of the boreal forest on a ridgetop overlooking the Tanana Valley—should be enhanced by the design and care of the landscape. Alaska birch and white spruce provide the dominant landscape structure and should be used to give continuity to the campus and to tie it to the larger setting. Within this overriding structure, ornamental species should be concentrated where they have the greatest impact—in pedestrian gathering areas, at building entrances, and along roads and pathways.

### **2. Organize the landscape in a purposeful manner that conveys the history, location, cultures, and educational mission of the university**

The landscape is an extension of the educational environment, both as a place of informal exchange and vehicle for understanding the ecology, history, and cultures of Interior Alaska. The composition of the landscape should frame significant views, shape gathering places, encourage interaction, and reveal the unique attributes of the region. Much of UAF’s land is dedicated to teaching and research. Through the careful selection and identification of native and introduced species in the built campus, the entire campus could become an arboretum.



*The open space adjacent to Eielson and Signers’ Hall includes an informal composition of native spruce and birch trees.*



### **3. Optimize seasonal and temporal beauty of the subarctic environment**

The distinct geography of the campus provides an opportunity and mandate to design for the extremes of darkness and light, and the full range of seasonal color—from winter’s magnificent alpenglow shades and subtle hues of white, black, and blue, to the riotous colors of summer flowers. The campus should look and function at its best year-round.

### **4. Set standards for landscape architecture in the subarctic**

As the nation’s leading research institution on Arctic issues, UAF is uniquely qualified to set standards for the subarctic landscape. In the tradition of the Fairbanks Experimental Farm Fields and Georgeson Botanical Garden, the entire campus could become a demonstration project in sustainable site planning, landscape design, and plant culture in the far north.

### **5. Ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of campus users**

The design of the landscape should ensure ease of movement and address issues of visibility. It should impart a sense of safety at all times, with particular responsiveness to winter conditions in the subarctic.



*The campus commands remarkable views across the Tanana Valley.*



*Research facilities include the buildings on the West Ridge as well as the agricultural fields of the Georgeson Botanical Garden.*



*The landscape of Constitution Plaza welcomes students and visitors to the UAF campus.*



*Students actively use the campus as part of their research and training.*

## RELATED GOALS AND ACTIONS OF THE 2002 CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

The campus landscape plan builds on the goals and actions established in the 2002 UAF campus master plan.

### Relevant goals are:

- I. Create an efficient and attractive campus environment conducive to learning
- V. Highlight natural assets of campus and the unique northern environment

### Associated actions are:

- A4. Develop a landscape plan and site design standards that will provide year-round plant diversity and enhance the overall appearance of campus.
- A5. Require landscape and site enhancements as part of all new construction projects.
- A6. Enhance existing and create new outdoor gathering areas and plazas.
- A7. Provide lighting throughout campus that maximizes safety, enhances wayfinding, and minimizes light pollution.
- A16. Present a unified image in campus roadway and entrance design.
- A19. Develop Yukon Drive into a safe and appealing environment for pedestrians and non-motorized uses.
- A22. In selected areas, protect scenic views and /or establish stands of trees.
- A25. Use art on campus to highlight special areas and enhance the overall surroundings.

## LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

The landscape plan distinguishes two broad areas—forest and meadow—identifying selected parts of campus to be reforested, while leaving others open to preserve important views to and from the campus. Within these areas are detailed landscaped places, including community gathering places, major campus entrances, and roads. Strengthening the presence of the landscape within the built campus, in particular, will help to tie the campus more firmly to its larger setting, unify the varied architecture, and give a more comfortable and inviting scale to gathering places, walkways, roads, and parking. To create a consistent look, standard pavement and furnishings will be used across the campus, with special treatments in the detailed landscape places.



*Trail through the forest.*



*South view from Yukon Drive toward the Thompson Drive Entry.*





*Landscape Framework Diagram*