Turf Battle: Atwater Landscape Design Competition
February 7, 2011

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Proposed Zones

- Chateau Quad
- Atwater Plaza
- Classrooms
- The Pass
- No Mow Zone
1. Create and Define Outdoor Spaces

One of the biggest issues with the current Atwater landscape seems to be its vast, undefined character. While it currently provides ‘open space’ for potential recreation, it is under-used due because of its sloping turf, oddly-shaped spaces and heavy pedestrian traffic. In considering these issues, we have created distinct environments that can be used for classes, meetings, relaxation and performances as well as for circulation.

Outdoor Classrooms

We located outdoor rooms near the north ends of both Atwater halls A and B. Similar in character to the courtyard outside the southwest entrance of Bicentennial Hall, they are composed of three parallel slab benches and framed by permeable paving. The simple arrangement can easily function as a classroom (for up to twenty students), a study nook, a meeting spot or just a place to hang out. At night when the Atwater Suites are full of party-goers, the room transforms into spillover space for the usual throng of students flocking around the entrances, either to get a breath of fresh air or to pause with that special someone. They are strategically located next to the only non-glazed areas on the ground floor which helps maintain visual and acoustic privacy for the residences and preserves the intimate character of the space. In summer months, the river birch trees planted around the southwest corner shade the space and help provide a more sheltered feeling. The open north side encourages users to enjoy the view out to the mountains.
**The Pass**

Some of the most popular hang-out spots on campus are also some of the more modest ones. The walls outside of Ross Dining Hall and off the south end of BIIHall, like the steps in front of the library are some of the precedents that come to mind. Our proposed ‘pass’ transforms an existing thruway into a more welcoming spot to pause, gather and socialize. The wall successfully mitigates the natural slope of the site, creating a level recreation area that is perfect for lounging with a book in the sun or tossing around a Frisbee with friends. Students could also use The Pass as an informal stage for small productions or gatherings.

**Chateau Quad**

Currently, the torn-up grass behind the Chateau sees little use and the space bleeds into the surrounding spaces. By better defining the quad as the space between the rocky outcropping and the proposed terrace, the space acquires a needed identity. The paths crossing to the north and the change in grade create the final edge, but the continued lawn and the preserved view corridor down through the two halls link it to the lower spaces and beyond.
2. Improve environmental quality of the landscape

**Low Impact**
To help reduce the human impact on the landscape, the project includes the introduction a large section of no-mow zone, like those already in place around campus. This would decrease wear on this area, improve ecological diversity and decrease maintenance. Through choice of materials and careful planning, our project has a small footprint. Implementation requires minimal excavation and the project fits within the current structure of the site.

**Water**
In addition to the already planned improvements in drainage and soil quality, water mitigation will be aided through the addition of trees which help prevent washouts. The network of roots from the native plants of the no-mow zone will be another help. Additionally, the proposed ‘hardscape’ is a permeable paving system which reduces storm water runoff but can still handle heavy traffic. Reinvigorating the wetland will be the final step to responsibly handling water on this site.

**Vegetation**
The addition of trees in strategic areas and the no-mow zone increase both the ecological health and livability of the landscape. The plantings attract songbirds and other wildlife and generally enliven an otherwise dull lawn. They also provide necessary shading in specific locations and act as a windbreak throughout the area to counteract the wind tunnel effect between Atwater A and B.
3. Mitigate circulation problems

Atwater Plaza

The network of paths winding between the chateau, the suites and the dining hall are currently disjointed and fail to funnel traffic through defined nodes. This in turn encourages people to cut across the rock outcropping and across the grass, further tearing up the quad. By developing a unifying paved plaza in the west, we hope to facilitate better circulation paths, leaving the grass untouched by through traffic but available for lounging. By paving with permeable pavers and not concrete, the plaza reads as a separate entity that exists among the paths while still providing a durable service. The proposed plaza functions as a gathering spot and allows for the addition of tables and chairs if desired. It also preserves the existing view corridor from Battell Beach out towards Chipman Hill. It is a link and a gateway between the Atwater neighborhood and the rest of the lower campus.
Pedestrian friendly

Currently students drive their cars on the sidewalk and the lawn between the Atwater halls. The introduction of a gate at the northwest corner is needed to prevent this traffic. Additionally, the no-mow zone will discourage students from finding alternative routes. Since the facilities and the occasional emergency vehicle still need easy access to the buildings, the most simple and cost-effective solution is to install a gate similar to those already present across campus.

Bike Storage

Current bike racks will be located on more durable surfaces. The areas defined by permeable pavers close to both classrooms will help keep bikes organized and the landscape pristine. Bike racks will also be incorporated into the Atwater Plaza, across the sidewalk on the west side.
4. Cost-Efficiency

The biggest highlight of this proposed project might be its economic efficiency. By carefully fitting into the current site, the project delivers a high impact with a small economic footprint. The project focuses on the areas needing the most improvements and creates spaces that can serve a variety of needs, like the outdoor classrooms and the pass. While we think that the project would be very successful if implemented as-is, there are several potential enhancements that could be added if the budget allows.

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5. Potential Enhancements

**Allen Sidewalk**
The west side of Allen sees a lot of wear and is currently covered with gravel. We propose extending the side walk in front of the exit door to better link the main corridor with the Atwater Dining Hall. This would also create a triangular island like the one by the Allen entrance. It could be either left as gravel or re-planted. This area could also benefit from an additional bench for dining hall overflow.

**New Bike Racks**
The current bike racks function sufficiently so there is no real need for them to change. That said, new bike racks could potentially store bikes more efficiently, securely or attractively.

**Nicer Gate**
The highly functional and cost-efficient gate that was specified could easily be improved upon. Custom designed or mechanical gates could be attractive options, but the prices would be high.

**More Plantings**
As the years go by, it is expected that the plantings and trees, especially within the no-mow zone, could be expanded upon. Other areas that could use a little more color and life are surrounding the dining hall stairs, the bike path leading to the dining hall and the gate area near the parking lot.

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**Project Budget**

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