

A More Than Traveled Road



First impressions sometimes convey startling and unintended messages.

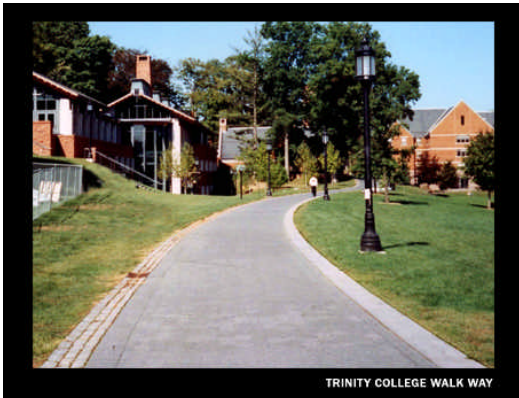
Why, for instance, is the young woman shown in the upper photo walking in the road?

It would seem there is nowhere else to walk — on pavement anyway.

In fact, she is not walking on a road, but on the main walkway connecting the campus library to the campus center. The surface also serves intermittently as a driveway to buildings in the central campus — a common requirement on many campuses. Although, who could guess it isn't a street?

The devil is in the detailing, it would seem. The edge treatment, the yellow-painted curbing and the standard freeway catch basins all give the distinct impression that cars and trucks belong here and pedestrians do not.

Consider the salutary effects of an alternative: a surface that looks like a walkway and conveys to the pedestrian: You belong here. Step this way, please. Such a surface could also support occasional vehicular passage as long as it has a clearly demarcated and sturdy edge, and breadth enough for a service vehicle to (carefully) pass pedestrians and not create ruts in the sod along side.



The lower photo shows an example of a walkway from a different campus with a stone edging to a broad asphalt surface, materials which are at once easy to maintain and handsome in appearance. The upslope side of this particular walk is detailed as a cobble-paved gutter to channel run-off water. This latter detail is a labor-intensive construction option; the gutter could have been designed for some economy (and requisite plainer appearance) as an asphalt gutter, possibly with a stone or cobble edging.

The expanses of pavement in both examples are the same economical asphalt surface. The substantive differences between the two are the edgings and two distinctly divergent first impressions — one where pedestrians seem to be intruders, the second where they are cued to enter into and engage in the collegial experience.

Charles A. Craig

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385 Concord Avenue
Belmont, Massachusetts
02478-3096

tel 617-489-1162
fax 617-484-1595

www.dlca.com