

# Robert S. Hayter, RLA

## Career Story – Professional Fusion

### EDUCATION

**Master of Agriculture**  
North Carolina State University

**Bachelor of Science**  
Horticultural Science,  
North Carolina State University

**Associate in Applied Science**  
Landscape Gardening,  
Sandhills Community College

### EXPERIENCE

**Present**  
Principal, LKC Engineering and  
Landscape Architecture  
lkcengineering.com

**1997 - 2013**  
Principal, The Hayter Firm

**1999-Present**  
Partner, The Southern Landscape  
Group

**1991-1997**  
Principal, Hayter, Reynolds and  
Jewell

**1987-1991**  
Principal, RobArt and Associates

**1986-1987**  
Adjunct Lecturer, Department of  
Horticultural Science, North Carolina  
State University

**1974-1987**  
Instructor/Garden Director,  
Sandhills Community College

**1973-1974**  
Assistant Manager, Waynesboro  
Landscape Company

**1972**  
Garden Development Manager,  
Walter Davis Gardens

### PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATIONS

North Carolina #529  
Virginia #606

Robert's career path has progressed on parallel rails – contributing to the resilience and visual quality of built environments, and business strategy. Over his 48 years as a teacher, business owner, practitioner and consultant in the built environment and small business sectors, Robert Hayter has dedicated his career to three tenets: lifelong learning, framing a dialogue for strategic thinking, and drawing consensus that focuses on desirable outcomes. His critical thinking and analytical skills are equally balanced with a natural ability to create discourse among many disciplines. The result has contributed to an awareness of the unity of place making, resource optimization and organizational effectiveness.

Robert believes that both environmental and organizational sustainability strikes a balance of resource allocations, where social, environmental and economic values are equivalent. As an agent for change, Robert seeks to explain the long-term values associated with each. He believes this type of thinking defines the future of resilient businesses and environments.

### Teaching, Consulting and Longevity

Robert has dedicated his career to educating others on sound interdependent principles. Where business, the natural environment and social goodwill thrive. An instructor and campus garden director for 13 years at one the nation's best two-year landscape programs, his early career at [Sandhills Community College](#) has shaped his professional role as a consensus builder through knowledge.

Throughout his career, he has served as preferred expert, instructor, author, lecturer, speaker and board member. History, economics, politics and community need play a vital role in his perspective. The application of that knowledge is evidenced in Robert's role in the sustained progression of his own County, through influencing small business development and sound public policy.

In the mid-1990s, Robert sought to protect a small community of three historic towns with differing views on development, during a time of steady population growth. Among them was the Village of Pinehurst in North Carolina, originally master-planned by Frederick Law Olmsted's office and implemented by Warren Manning.

*“Robert’s integrity is above reproach, and it makes him a very effective leader. He engages and persuades people at an elevated level, based on an innate set of core values - honesty, trust and respecting other’s views. His approach is subtle; he never demands that his voice be the only one heard. He builds consensus by caring and articulates a shared vision that leads to action. I don’t know anyone else who has that talent.”*

Patrick Corso  
Former CEO  
Pinehurst Resort and  
Country Club

## PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

### North Carolina Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

President, 2005  
Board Member, 2002-07  
Awards Chair-2003

### American Nursery and Landscape Association

Special Advisor on Industry Evolution  
Feature Presenter, National Management Conference  
2001-2012

### The Garden Center Group

Site/Facility Consultant  
Board of Advisors  
1999-Present

### New Garden Nursery and Landscape Company

Board of Advisors  
1983-Present

### Scenic North Carolina

Board Member  
2000-2002

### J.C. Raulston Arboretum

Charter Board Member  
1989-1993  
Facility Use Committee  
2000-2004

### North Carolina Association of Nurserymen and Landscape Grounds Management Association

Special Advisor on Industry Strategic Issues  
Featured Presenter, Professional Education Sessions  
1974-2009

### North Carolina Arboretum

Board of Directors  
2005-2013

### Permio Internazionale Torsanlorenzo

2006: Awards Juror

Robert understood the towns were in jeopardy of losing their unique historic character, based on incongruent development ordinances that failed to manage modernization along their busiest roads. He opened a dialogue between governing bodies to proactively align their policies. As a result, Robert co-authored the 1995 Moore County Highway Corridor Protection and Development Plan that gained the support of hundreds of businesses and land owners, a **1998 NCASLA Merit Award Project**. Still in effect today, the plan gained recognition as a model to other small towns in cohesive policy planning.

Robert's study of community politics, Manning's work and development patterns and local business needs led to more than 25 years of collaboration with the Village of Pinehurst's leaders. He co-authored the Village's first Unified Development Ordinance, the biggest step in modernization of its development policies to date. He crafted open-space and parking studies, designed public parks to stimulate economic growth, and community activities.

He has also worked with the Village's largest stakeholder and landowner, [Pinehurst Resort](#), for the past 30 years to preserve, protect and perpetuate Olmsted Firm's vision within the context of the resort's objectives, **leading to two NCLSA Awards**.

His longstanding influence within this National Historic Landmark District provides a forum to educate and further unify the community on sound policy, while fostering enduring public-private partnerships.

A trusted voice, Robert has also become an invested advocate for land use planning in the region, serving in leadership roles at the local and county level. Those appointments include Chairman of the Moore County Land Use Planning Committee, Moore County Planning Board Chairman, and Member of the Moore County Environmental Quality Board, among others. He also served as Vice Chair of Pinehurst's UDO Rewriting Committee, to prepare the community for continued growth within its rich context.

With his primary focus on practicing Landscape Architecture, he was also running a small business. Which gave him insight for his parallel rails of interest- resilient built environments and sound business strategy.

Other than his childhood lawn mowing summer job and operating a family farm nursery that produced 250,000 plants per year while being an instructor at Sandhills Community College, Robert's business

*“Robert exemplifies strategic thinking and progressive business practices in a profession that needs more of both. He elevates the credibility and role of landscape architecture among the planning, development, construction and building management communities. He engages in leadership that achieves actual results from which others can benefit professionally and practically.”*

Bob Dolibois  
Executive Vice President  
ANLA

## CIVIC LEADERSHIP

### Sandhills Community College

Board of Trustees  
Vice Chairman

### Moore County Planning Board

Chairman

### Moore County Land Use Study

Chairman

### Land Use/Zoning Code Advisor

Moore County  
Village of Pinehurst  
Town of Southern Pines

### Moore County Partners in

**Progress** (Economic Development)

Land Use and Development Advisor

### Moore County Chamber of Commerce

Past Chairman of the Board  
Facility and Long Range Planning  
Committee  
Board of Directors

### Moore County Public Education Foundation

Past President of Foundation; Board  
of Directors

### Moore County Leadership Institute

Founder and Graduate

### Moore County Environmental Quality Advisory Board

Past Board Member

### EPA Aberdeen Superfund Sites

Community Liaison

### Sandhills Rotary Club

Past President; Community Service  
Community; Charter Member

insights were limited. But his curiosity kept him learning more about what causes successful small business.

At the outset of his consulting practice business was all about doing good work. After nine years of trying to do that and run the family farm he read an article in HBR by Michael Porter titled *What is Strategy?* He interests and efforts were made clear. Business strategy was the answer to success business operations. From that time and continuing today, Robert's quest to learn and apply the principles of strategy in small businesses is a passion. He now consults over one hundred small businesses and co-owns eight businesses.

Putting things into practice he started a new full-service landscape contracting company in 1999 with two partners. Integrating business strategy principles and sound operational processes, the company was profitable within three years. Today it is a model of small business performance with annual revenues of \$4.5 million with 48 employees.

Beyond his business and civic activities, he has also impacted the historic resort industry, where a balance between heritage and contemporary land uses has been sought. As the resident landscape architect for 12 years at [The Homestead](#), a 3,000-acre historic property in Virginia's Allegheny Mountains, Robert guided responsible land use by informing owners, citizens, state regulators and staff of the lasting benefit of effective planning. **His long-term commitment to preserving the unique character of the 18<sup>th</sup> century property led to an NCASLA Honor Award, and an ANLA American Garden Superior Award.**

Similar work was performed at the [Mt. Washington Resort](#) in New Hampshire, where Robert worked with the resort developers, architects, local botanists and wildlife biologists to design and install a green roof in one of the most extreme locations in the country. In a region with many ecological zones, Mt. Washington averages 100 days of recorded hurricane-force winds at its peak and sub-zero temperatures.

Building a team of local experts and researching plant materials in various micro-hardiness zones was key to the success of the project. The resulting garden can survive the harshest winters, features more than 20 indigenous plant species, and is a place of immense beauty and popularity for guests, year-round.

In each case, the student researching each region's intrinsic character

*"The award-winning Levine Science Resource Center project could not have been accomplished successfully without Robert's exceptional contributions. He was repeatedly recommended as the best person to assist us with specifying the best plants and high quality locally imported soils. He surpassed our expectations. As a result, a parking lot was transformed into a major academic building with sustainable and maintainable campus open spaces which continue to support interdisciplinary outdoor classes, social interaction, and special events."*

Jennifer Jones, FASLA  
Principal  
Carol A. Johnson  
Landscape Architects

## PUBLICATIONS/RESEARCH

1994, Village of Pinehurst  
Development Code

1982, North Carolina Certified  
Plantsman Manual

(Year)Guide to Writing and Using  
Landscape Planting Specifications

2010, featured in;The Professional  
Entrepreneur When Cowboys Grow  
Up by William Hildebolt

2013 Co-authored Chapter 42 of  
Practicing Sustainability by  
Guruprasad Madhavan, Barbara  
Oakley, David Green, David Koon,  
Penny Low, Editors

## SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

1983 Grand Award – New Garden  
Village, NCNLA

1999, Merit Award – Pinehurst  
Resort, NCASLA

1999, Merit Award – Holly Inn, ASLA

1999, Honor Award – The  
Homestead, NCASLA

1999, Superior Award – The  
Homestead, ANLA American Garden  
Awards

1999-Design With Brick-Landscape  
Design Merit Award-Pinehurst Resort  
and Country Club Main Campus and  
The Holly Inn Site Improvement  
Program

2008-Award of Recognition –  
Cameron Art Museum Master  
Landscape Plan, NCASLA

1999, William F. Hollister Award/  
Community Volunteer of the Year

1996, Distinguished Alumnus,  
Sandhills Community College

became the instructor to many executives, town leaders, staff and citizens on responsible site use and development through Landscape Architecture.

### Stewardship and Strategy

Robert's involvement for what has become sustainability has produced a significant impact on the built environment. Both in theory and policy, his diligence in studying, educating and employing sound business and design principles has inspired others.

In 1992, Robert was hired as the onsite landscape architect for the [Duke University Levine Science Resource Center](#) project. Prior to Robert's arrival, several campus building projects had been poorly planned and suffered from several risk factors such as site erosion, invasive weed growth, and soil impermeability, mostly due to non-indigenous soil and plant choices.

An expert in local soils and an author of North Carolina Plant manuals, Robert was specifically sought by Carol Johnson & Associates to convert the 700-space parking lot into a viable landscape surrounding the new building. Moreover, he was selected for construction management of the entire project, uniting architects, engineers and campus leaders under one cause. Using all locally based materials, **the project was cited by Duke University as the standard by which all new projects were to be designed. The project would also be lauded by the NCASLA in 1995** for its commitment to sustainability and the project's ability to control future risk.

More than 15 years later, Robert would return to the campus to orchestrate the smart-sustainable landscape design and construction at the [Duke Smart Home](#). One of 150 national pilot projects for the Sustainable Sites Initiative, the on-campus training facility included both a "smart home" and now sustainable landscape.

Water management played a significant role in Robert's collaborative work with scientists and student partners. Through extensive use of bioswales, filters, storage, plant selections and innovative stormwater management systems, the final design could reduce water consumption by as much as 70 percent.

The result is not only scientifically sound in promoting sustainable ecosystems that benefit on-site residents, the University and visitors, but provides a new and innovative pathway to landscape installation and maintenance. It is physical proof that leaders can see, understand, show and use to offer consideration of the SITES initiative.

**The project, completed in 2012, gained the interest of numerous U.S. congressmen and state officials, as**

*"Robert's view of landscape architecture has no boundaries. It goes beyond academic, property or state lines; it transcends society. That view is what we all aspire to – the ability to understand the how as well as why you should look at it peripherally. Robert is building a vision, not a legacy. He'd rather build a better society - not just a better project."*

George Briggs, FASLA  
Executive Director  
North Carolina  
Arboretum

**well as the EPA, GSA and other governmental agencies.**

Furthermore, Robert has served as the American Nurseries and Landscape Association's representative to first drafts of SITES Manual 2010 and was a driving force in creating the Greenscape Business Alliance. The latter drew a seemingly disparate group of horticultural, landscape, business, trade and industry leaders to work together to explore landscape stewardship through sustainability.

Not only was Robert involved in helping set a precedent for such organizations to work together, but he has been an essential player in clarifying critical elements and finding common ground on the topic of sustainability.

### **Purpose and Influence**

Where most Landscape Architects are content to build a viable practice and create exceptional designs, Robert has forged an unconventional career path. Empowered with innate leadership ability, his influence has impacted many, both inside and outside his chosen field.

During his six-year tenure on the NCASLA board, Robert leveraged relationships with state legislators to convert North Carolina to a practice state. The act forever promoted Landscape Architecture as a profession.

A gifted instructor, Robert was the featured lecturer at the 2007 ANLA Management Clinic and was noted as an expert in strategic company management. He created an exclusive landscape business program, entitled [Optimum Provision Management](#), to help service providers improve operations. It is widely accepted by many landscape companies today, and was featured in a book entitled, *"The Professional Entrepreneur – When Cowboys Grow Up,"* published in 2010, by Dr. Bill Hildeblot.

Meeting and becoming a friend of Bill Hildebolt was another turning point in Robert's career path. Bill invited Robert to introduce Optimum Provision Management (OPM) to his company which led to a conversation about several failed attempts Bill had made in expanding his business. After learning how Bill had approached business expansion, Robert offered a totally different way to scale the business. Bill and Robert joined forces with two other small business owners to expand the Brand.

The misfortune of Bill's death caused by cancer in 2020, has resulted in Robert and his partners advancing Bill's legacy. Today they are positioning Nature's Select as the leader in biologically enhanced lawn and plant care in North Carolina.

With a talent in connecting the right people at the right time, Robert influenced a significant economic development project in herbal medicine between China and Western North Carolina. Through his six-year tenure on the [North Carolina Arboretum](#) board of directors, he opened a pathway to discourse between leaders, state senators and Hunan Province representatives. Recognized by the Governor, it fulfills the Arboretum's mission to champion market opportunities for North Carolina-based specialty crop growers.

He also became the Landscape Architectural representative for "[A Growing Interest](#)," a national conference convened by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies and supported by the NOAA National Climatic Data Center, in 2008. The two-day meeting

drew public and private groups together to examine the impacts of climate change on the plant sector.

The opening dialogue resulted in a follow-up meeting four years later - "A Growing Interest 2" – where Robert served as the keynote speaker, among several governmental and scientific experts. Robert laid the groundwork for meaningful dialogue by outlining the key players and challenges facing the entire landscape profession. In his opening remarks he shared thoughts from over 20 landscape architect and plant-sector leaders to lead the two-day discussion, creating a shared voice among landscape professionals.

Over the past 8 years, Robert and his associates at LKC have served as campus Landscape Architects at High Point University in High Point, North Carolina. Our contributions have helped establish HPU as a resort campus.

Beyond his 48 years of practice, Robert is continually sought as an advisor on such projects of major significance, where decisions produce enduring change.

In this unorthodox approach to erase boundaries, he has broken many stereotypes for Robert's career path. He humbly leads by example with integrity, knowledge and great empathy, gaining trust in nearly any forum. He engages in leadership in ways in which others can benefit, both professionally and practically. He is lauded for his great talent in collaboration, producing macro-level results. In each act, he is an ambassador for the fusion of business strategy and enhanced built environments.