

AUGUST 2009

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



COMPETITION

Seattle Center Skate Plaza Opens | Where's the Square? Winners
| Recalling Thomas Mawson | Vancouver Convention Centre



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The purpose of *Sitelines* is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.

Editor's Note

Brett Hitchins

At the time *Sitelines'* last issue went to print, Daniel Roehr and team were receiving top honour in the *Where is the Square?* design competition hosted by the Vancouver Public Space Network. Though the contest was intended to uncover winning ideas for Vancouver's missing plaza, its champion identified another element missing from landscape architecture in British Columbia – something less visible than an urban plaza— is competition.

In his acceptance speech, Roehr called for action. "Our competition contribution has to be seen as an answer to raise more awareness about the creation and participation in competition culture... It is our wish that this contribution will stimulate thinking and awareness to take risks, thereby pushing the envelope and discussion further in the design field as a whole". His words raise an important issue that demands discussion across the province.

Our August edition of *Sitelines* examines a diverse range of topics with a shared theme of competition, many focusing on the public realm. Our first article in a new series on Olympic Sites (pg 15) profiles the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion, where the world's media will converge in six months to cover the athletic events of the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. No modern event can parallel the near-universal appeal and intense competition that have come to define the Olympics. This begs the question – how can we echo this in the profession of landscape architecture?

Another project profile, the opening of the Seattle Center Skate Plaza (pg 5), investigates ideas for integrating skateboarding into urban spaces. And, prompted by Janet Waymark's new book entitled *Thomas Mawson: life, gardens and landscapes*, Clive Justice provides an account of Mawson's imprint on British Columbia and across Canada (pg 9). Having practiced throughout the Great Depression, Mawson himself was no doubt well acquainted with the effects of a disparaged economy on a profession still on the periphery of popular recognition.

Certainly few of us, if any, remain oblivious to the heightened sense of competition that has developed within the profession in the past year. The austerity of the economic climate has resulted in many firms competing for few projects, and talented individuals vying for even fewer jobs. If there is an imperative message to be learned from the recent state of affairs, it is the necessity of competition in landscape architecture for the sake of improving the quality of our work. This issue of *Sitelines* challenges us to view the merit of competition in landscape architecture and how it might spur ingenuity and excellence beyond design. Here's to a little healthy competition. [SU](#)

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Cover Image: The Vancouver Convention Centre expansion features a 6.5 acre living roof. Photo courtesy of the Vancouver Convention Centre.

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NEWS |

JWT Design Ltd. Wins AIBC Award

JWT Architecture and Planning, operated by JWT Design Ltd., is proud to be the inaugural recipient of the AIBC Emerging Firm Award. This award is given to firms in their first five years of practice that have shown exemplary promise, a clear vision, and defined goals in the practise of architecture. Consideration was given to criteria including: exemplary design skills, excellence in work quality, support of community and the profession, and commitment to leadership and excellence. James Tuer, MAIBC, MBCSLA is the principal of JWT Design Ltd, which specializes in architecture, planning, and landscape architecture. **51**

UBC Welcomes Kris Fox

Cynthia Girling, BCSLA, Chair UBC
Landscape Architecture Program

The Landscape Architecture Program at UBC is pleased to introduce its newest faculty member, Mikus Kristoffer (Kris) Fox.

Fox has a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Studies from Cornell University. In addition to planning experience, he is a registered landscape architect in the state of California and has practised landscape architecture for six years in California.

Fox previously held visiting teaching positions at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Cornell University, and UC Berkeley Extension. He has taught a range of design studios, materials and construction classes, advanced graphics, and urban design. At UBC, Fox will teach studios and classes in both the Bachelor of Environmental Design Program and the Landscape Architecture Program.

As a practising landscape architect, Fox worked with firms that pushed design and experimentation with materials, including



UBC welcomes its newest faculty member Kris Fox. Photo: Cynthia Girling

Land Studio in Berkeley and Marta Fry Landscape Associates in San Francisco. Since 2006, Fox has been transitioning to a more teaching-focused career and has studied post-industrial sites, experimentation with materials, and modular sustainable construction. He intends to continue researching new trends in materiality at UBC. **51**

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Douglas Paterson Wins CSLA Teaching Award



Photo courtesy of UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2009 CSLA Recognition Awards – including our own Douglas Paterson, FCSLA, MBCSLA. Paterson will be recognized with the CSLA Teaching Award. This award honours an individual who has made a substantial and significant contribution to landscape architecture education. Nominees must be full time or emeritus landscape architecture faculty members who have made sustained, significant contributions to a landscape architecture program. **51**

Seattle Center Skate Plaza

Urban design, artistic glass, and sound construction integrate skateboarding in the public realm.

DESIGN TEAM

Landscape Architect van der Zalm + associates inc

Skatepark Designer New Line Skateparks Inc

Architect Weinstein AU

Artist Perri Lynch

General Contractor McLure and Sons

Mechanical Engineer/Electrical WSP Flack+Kurtz

Skatepark Contractor Grindline Skateparks

Structural Engineer KPFF Consulting Engineers

In a high profile location, with lofty expectations from an educated Seattle skateboarding community, van der Zalm + associates inc partnered with New Line Skateparks Inc to build the new Seattle Center Skate Plaza. Undergoing rigorous consultation with City officials and other interest groups, the project overcame extensive construction challenges to create a seamless space enjoyed by skaters and non-skaters alike.

Located in the middle of the Seattle Center Campus, bordering Thomas Street and 2nd Avenue, the 10,000 square foot skate plaza lays in the shadows of Seattle's iconic Space Needle. At a cost of \$1.5 million, the project will accommodate an anticipated 60,000 unique visits per year. The site formerly contained a pavilion from the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. Known as Pavilion A, the glass and concrete structure was carefully dismantled to allow for construction and to ensure that all mechanical and catering needs of the adjacent KeyArena were maintained throughout construction.

The Seattle City Council mandated construction of the Seattle Center Skate Park after a former skatepark on the Seattle Center Campus was sold to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for development of its world headquarters. The project was funded by proceeds of the sale and other City capital funds. van der Zalm + associates inc was retained as the prime consultant for the overall project, with New Line Skateparks Inc hired for the skatepark design.

The team, with acclaimed international experi-



ence, approaches each project with a common question, "How do we create the next generation of skateboarders where they do not have to be segregated into separate spaces?," says Kyle Dion, owner of New Line Skateparks Inc. In a design profession that is often instructed to implement skateboard deterrents, this way of thinking is challenging common assumptions of how to integrate skateparks in the public realm. Dion, the lead designer for the skate plaza, remarks on the well established skate spots in the world like Love Park in Philadelphia, Pier 7 in San Francisco, and the plazas in Barcelona, "Thinking back, all of those were just great civic spaces, places designed with people in mind that skaters gravitated towards".

Mark van der Zalm, principal van der Zalm + associates inc, elaborates, "The success of these famed public spaces has shaped our ▶



[1] The skate plaza features a 3.5m high skateable glass panel

[2] Young skater on opening day

Images: Greg Shisman

approach to site planning and integrated design. Our goals include blurring the edges of designated 'play space' and urban plaza space". This has proven successful in the highly urbanized environments of San Francisco, Winnipeg, Austin, and Umea, Sweden. The creation of safe edges for spectators, parents, and users creates a vibrant environment and ultimately leads to the success of the space. The team designs each project as a public plaza first and then makes modifications to evolve the design into a fully skateable space.

At Seattle Center, the skatepark is designed as a flowing street-like plaza where non-skaters can watch users challenge modern skate elements such as stairs, ledges, and transitions, which accommodate skaters of all skill levels. By skatepark standards, the park is small, which demanded innovation in the design of its terrain. Handling 50-60 skaters at a time, it combines street and bowl-style skate elements to challenge a mix of users.

In a city known for its glass artistry, the focal point of the park is a 3.5m high skateable glass panel, believed to be the first of its kind. Local artist Perri Lynch designed architectural glass panels that border the Thomas Avenue portion of the site, serving as both visual and acoustic barriers to an adjacent church and main pedestrian corridor. The panels display images derived from decks of used skateboards and add an aesthetically defining element to the site while embracing skateboard culture.

Lightweight styrofoam voiding was installed to meet load-bearing requirements. Though voiding is a common element in landscape construction, and has been used in skateparks before, the intricacy of the design required skatepark contractor Grindline Skateparks to shape the foam by hand, inventing new tools and techniques as they went. This engineering challenge, combined with the design team's directive to create a multi-purpose space, and extensive public consultation has resulted in its most challenging project to date.

Seattle Center Skate Plaza demonstrates that great civic spaces can accommodate skateboarding in a way that is enjoyable to everyone. By designing the space for non-skaters first, the plaza attracts a diverse demographic and is enjoyable even to non-skaters. **51**



3

[3] Glass panels behind display imagery adapted from used skateboard decks
Image: Seattle Center courtesy of Chuck Tuck

DESIGN BUILD INSTALL



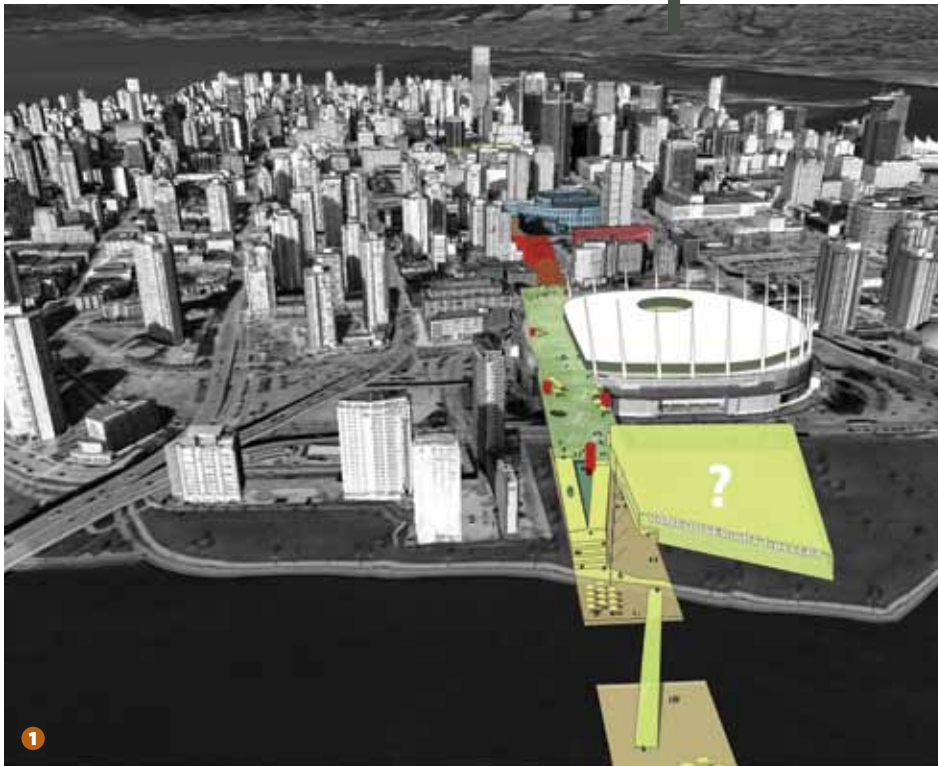
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Where's the Square



The success of a grassroots organized urban design competition challenges design offices across the province to engage in competition culture.

Despite Vancouver's many public squares, including Victory, Granville, and Robson to name a few, none of them have come to serve as the City's defining public gathering place. So when the Vancouver Public Space Network decided to host an idea-based urban design competition for a new public square, not many would have thought that competition itself would be the winning idea.

Internationally respected cities around the world have come to rely on their public spaces as places to discover and celebrate their vitality. Already an internationally respected city itself, Vancouver is bound to become more so following the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. And yet, it lacks a quinte-

sential public commons, a space that strikes the balance between the intimate scale, which fosters social interaction, and the large scale, where the masses can come together to have their voices heard.

From November 2008 through March 2009, the Vancouver Public Space Network hosted the *Where's the Square?* design competition focused on generating ideas for a universally designed public square within the Vancouver City limits. The competition aimed to engage Vancouver residents in thinking about the value of such a space, where it might be located, and how it might look. Open to all individuals, schools, and organizations, the competition was very successful, receiving 54 international entries, 13 of which were shortlisted.

JURY SELECTED WINNER:

[1] The Band, submitted by Mark Ashby Architecture & Greenskins Lab (Mark Ashby, Kevin Kong, Isabel Kunigk and Daniel Roehr).

PEOPLE'S CHOICE WINNERS:

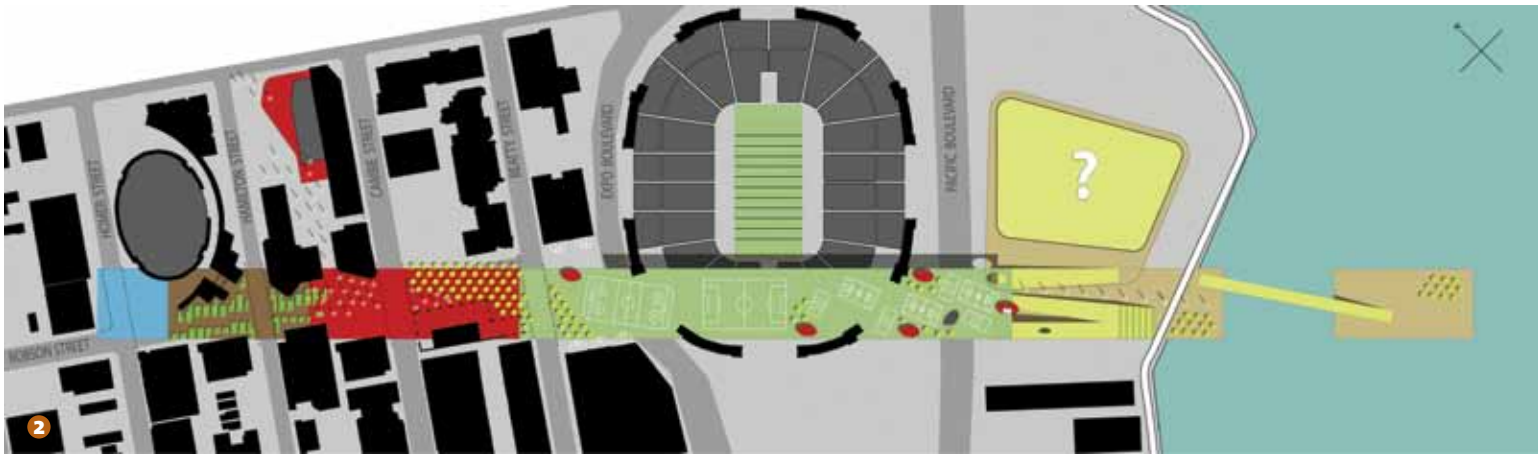
- [2] Vancouver Carpet, submitted by Hapa Collaborative (Joe Fry, Xenia Semeniuk and Doron Fishman)
- [3] Waterfront Square, submitted by Michael Alexander & Michael Painter (MPA Design) (Michael Alexander and Michael Painter)

[1] The Band – aerial perspective reveals the design's unbundled sequence of spaces

Image: Mark Ashby Architecture & Greenskins Lab

From enjoying a leisurely summer lunch, to hosting public concerts, the competition required the winning space be an adaptable one. Major design considerations included year round accessibility, proximity to public transit, a large staging area (including potential for storage), ability to accommodate at least 5,000 people standing, and emergency vehicle access. Entries were judged by a jury of related professionals first upon quality of ideas, followed by quality of design, ability to meet other design submission criteria, and over all presentation.

Entries were received from international teams of architects, urban designers and landscape architects, as well as students, and ▶



residents. There was diversity in the submissions, some of which re-imagined Robson Square, in the heart of the City, and others that focused on spaces located at the border of the City. Both concepts have their merits. Intuitively, the city-centre seems a logical choice; however, much of Vancouver's attraction is near the edge, as seen in its defining beaches and seawall.

It makes sense that the winning design unites both of these ideas. Jury member, Lance Berelowitz, wrote, "In an old design ideas competition tradition, the jury went back and pulled a previously rejected project out of the Also Ran pile that immediately captured the imagination of all jury members, and which seemed to go to the heart of the matter and answer it in a thought-provoking, provocative, yet lyrical way".

The winning submission, aptly titled The Band, was the creative work of Mark Ashby Architecture & Greenskins Lab. Stretching from Robson Street to the seawall at False Creek, the design connects the heart of downtown Vancouver to the water's edge through what the team calls an unbundled linear strip of programmed spaces. The thought provoking submission that Berelowitz describes, turns a portion of Robson Street into a pedestrian only zone, blocked off by

community garden plots, where the public institutions fronting the space come to define the use. Along the way public markets, bars and restaurants are integrated into public landscape and a section cuts through BC Place. A forest of umbrellas, café tables, and sports elements add interesting details that reflect adjacent buildings uses. The design finishes with a floating island in False Creek.

In his acceptance speech Daniel Roehr, founder of Greenskins Lab at UBC, took the opportunity to comment on the importance of competitions, "Our competition contribution has to be seen as an answer to raise more awareness about the creation and participation in competition culture". Roehr continued, "It is vital to introduce more competitions to encourage local offices and offices outside Vancouver to participate in raising the general level of design concept development and execution. Participating in competitions engages all design professionals and stimulates, through a competitive approach, eagerness to win, thereby encouraging a rigorous design process, versatile and flexible content and frame to discuss the execution of projects. It is our wish that this contribution will stimulate thinking and awareness to take risks, thereby pushing the envelope and discussion further in the design field as a whole".

[2] The Band - plan view
 [3] The Band - section
 Images: Mark Ashby Architecture & Greenskin Labs

"It is vital to introduce more competitions to encourage local offices and offices outside Vancouver to participate in raising the general level of design concept development and execution" – Daniel Roehr

Berelowitz reaffirms Roehr's call to action, adding, "Vancouver needs more design competitions. We should be fostering a design competition culture as a critical strategy in the pursuit of design excellence". *Where's the Square?* has done well in sparking debate amongst Vancouver residents about what the ideal, unifying, public space in the City may look like. Certainly, its legacy will linger in thought provoking discussions about what is truly Vancouver and how that is best represented in the City's urban environment. However, the competition's larger success might be seen in the conversations initiated in design offices of all types across the province, where professionals are now talking about the role of competition in raising the quality of British Columbia's design culture. [54](#)



Reflecting on Thomas Mawson

As Janet Waymark's recently released tribute to British landscape architect Thomas Mawson hits bookstores, Clive Justice shares thoughts on Mawson's work in British Columbia and across Canada.

For many years now I have been familiar with Thomas Mawson's work and his connection to Canada. Specifically, I'm reminded of Mawson's office in Vancouver just prior to the war and the assessment report he wrote with Magill's Liard and Pearce on the UBC campus plan by architects Sharp and Thompson. Mawson's work in other provinces includes: the Garden City Worker's Town Plan proposal for Calgary, the Lieutenant Governor's residence plan on Wascana Lake across from the Saskatchewan Legislative Buildings in Regina, the University of Saskatchewan plan in Saskatoon, and his elegant garden city subdivision designs in Victoria and Ottawa. On an academic level, Mawson presented town planning lectures at the University of Toronto and several universities in the states. I am also reminded of his suggestions for improvements to bow river bridges in Banff, Alberta, Canada's first National Park.

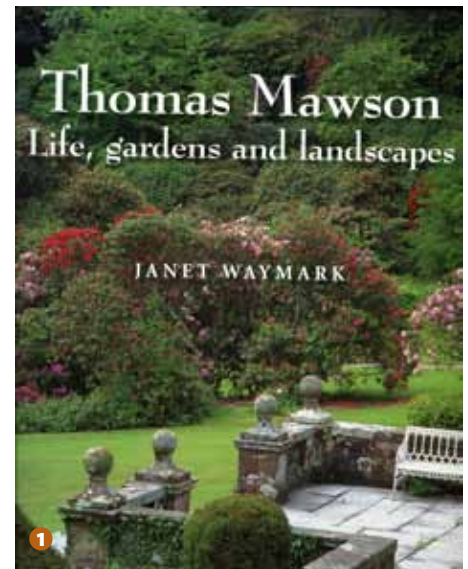
Janet Waymark, an English garden historian and historical geographer, has written a detailed account of the Mawson mini dynasty that is cached securely within the cultural context of the times, both in England and Canada's Western provinces. Its large 10 x 12 inch coffee table size displays a myriad of old photographs, full and half page plans, paintings and perspectives of many of Mawson's projects, built and proposed. All were meticulously drawn and drafted by Mawson's Manchester and Vancouver office teams.

My favourite is the perspective painting of the Lieutenant Governor's Residence and proposed grounds in Regina, Saskatchewan.

It shows an oval shaped ring-road centred on a boat dock at the lake edge, with a round-about on the City side. Not shown in this great prairie panorama is the yet to be built legislative building, the landscape of the wide prairie sky, and Wascana Lake. It represents an imperial colonial anachronism from the days of the British Empire. The pre-war and the immediate post-war English new industrial middle class, and the colonial and post-colonial non-industrial immigrant agricultural settlement of rural Western Canada began in the 1890s and extended into the 1920s.

This formal oval shape ground space also appears in built form as the centre core of the University of Saskatchewan's Saskatoon campus. We were faced with it when we began work on the campus and proposed, instead of grass and carpet bedding, that the oval be a stretch of water with a multi-pipe sheaf of wheat stems. In the winter they would freeze, creating a centrepiece ice sculpture and merge into a skating surface. We thought it would be a feature that was truly Canadian. We even made a model. However, like Mawson's, many of our proposals were rejected. When Muirhead & Justice met with the University of Saskatchewan in the summer of 1954 the University Board wanted an English landscape campus.

We were two colonial boys, one born on Salt Spring Island, grandson of an Indian Army Major, and trained as a landscape architect at Berkeley, the other an ex-RAF Navigator, Cambridge and UBC graduate in Engineering and Plant Pathology. Nonetheless, with our



Title: Thomas Mawson: life, gardens and landscapes
Author: Janet Waymark
Publisher: Fancis Lincoln, UK, 2009;
Price: \$58.04
Carried at: Chapters, Hager's Books

British Empire heritage, we complied. We produced a landscape with the great assistance from Dieter Martin, a German trained gardener who was the University of Saskatchewan's campus superintendent. In the Centennial year of 1967, the University of Saskatchewan's Saskatoon campus was rated by *Weekend*, an Eastern Canadian magazine, as the best English Landscape Campus in Canada.

Mawson's designs for the University of Saskatchewan's campus entry-exit gates were built using the local rusty orange prairie fieldstone. It looked like it had been copied directly from one of the gateway designs shown in *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, Second Edition. I remember sending for a copy of the book from my British bookseller and giving it as a Christmas present to my associate, Harry Webb. It was the first edition. Little did I know Mawson paid to have it published as a promotion piece for his firm. The first edition was published in 1900 followed by four subsequent editions, the last in 1926.

Waymark writes of it: "The books were practical guides for large country estate gardens and smaller urban gardens... [he] used his own examples which were well illustrated by excellent draftsmen artists, including... his son Edward Prentice Mawson... they explained Mawson's [Sr.] adherence to his ▶

‘composite’ style of formal and informal, and the reason why he found the Renaissance garden with its return to geometry, so important”. Waymark continues, “The usefulness of these volumes to the gardeners and garden owner’s, of the time cannot be underestimated, with their lists of plants shrubs and trees for specified sites; their illustrations of suitable statuary and seats, pergolas, trelliage and garden houses; their discussion of the importance of water, of the kitchen garden and its decorative effect and their examples of both executed and finished gardens to act as guidance”. The Architectural Review gave the third edition (1905) a fine review adding, “By this edition Mr. Mawson whose immense practical experience gives to his views a particular authority.” But as Waymark continues there was “A sting in the tail: ‘If he would pay more attention to the literary side of book-making,’ Mawson’s high-flown phrases with many quotations from writers as diverse as Homer, Francis Bacon, and the economist Walter Bagshot,

often obscured the value of what he had to say. Although it was the style at the time, he eventually realized that rhetorical flourishes closed the ears of the audience”.

Banff Conference

In the 1960s for the CSLA Annual Conference to be held at the School of Fine Arts campus in Banff, Alberta, I decided to involve the firm in preparing an exhibit of Thomas Mawson’s Western Canadian works. I sent a Justice & Webb staff member Christine Sharman to research the Laird-Darley-Mawson report on architect Sharp and Thompson’s layout of the UBC campus. Staff member, Stephen Sinclair tracked down Vancouver Park’s Board on the only Mawson project to be built in Stanley Park, the lighthouse plaza at Brockton Point. The design involved a prow shaped seawall with lower promenade that led down to public toilets and a lifeboat station below the viewing plaza and Vancouver Harbour’s only manned light house, launching ramp, and Keeper’s

Residence and garden. The lifeboat was never used and the iron gating in front of it was boarded up in the 1940s. It is not known what happened to the lifeboat. The Keeper’s Residence was demolished sometime before the City initiated heritage designation.

The contract for the rock work was awarded to a local contractor who went broke because Mawson insisted on a standard of stone masonry workmanship expected in the old country, which the local contractor was incapable of providing. Christine Sharman’s research on the Laird-Darley-Mawson report included the architects recommendation that all campus buildings be clad with local grey granite quarried on Haddington Island in Johnson Straits. Mawson commended the architects and proposed a novel way of getting the quarried granite to the building sites.

The stone could be quarried on the Island and shipped to a jetty at the base of Point Grey, loaded onto rail wagons and pulled by cable up the high bluffs to the campus building sites via temporary rails laid to each site. Pre-war, this would have been cheap and feasible. However, after the Great War the province had trouble affording to clad even one building in granite. With the onset of the Great Depression it became unthinkable to even consider using such an expensive material to face a building. All subsequent campus buildings until post World War II, especially the so-called temporary buildings constructed in the 1920s and 30s, were clad with what was euphemistically called California stucco.

Fred Brooks, another staff member, put together a slide show of Mawson’s work for me to show at the Banff Conference. It included the winning, but rejected, very formal fresh water lagoon plan axial with Georgia Street. It linked Stanley and Ceperley parks with a circular fresh water lake on the tidal flats. Later when Brooks left Justice & Webb to found his own firm and was looking for office rental space, he discovered the offices Mawson occupied between 1911-13 in the Royal Trust Building on Granville Street. In her book, Waymark includes a photo of office members from 1913 that included Robert Mattocks, head of staff and painter of the Regina LG scene, and John Mawson, office manager.



1. Book cover: Thomas Mawson: life, gardens and landscapes (pg. 9)
2. Saskatchewan Legislative Building master plan
3. Saskatchewan Legislative Building near Wascana Lake, Regina
4. Stone Gate, University of Saskatchewan
5. The Vancouver office staff, 1913

Images: Clive L. Justice, PhD, FCSLA, LMBSCA

Calgary


Waymark indicates that the extensive plans for Calgary were prepared in the Vancouver office. However, she credits the University's architectural archives for resurrecting many copies of the finished plans and the report recovered from the trash can where they had been consigned in a City offices cleanup in 1951. This is not how it happened. A recently graduated architect who had a summer job with the City of Calgary's Architectural Department, made the discovery, and recovery, from University of Manitoba. The Mawson drawing of buildings, bridges, and streets reminded him of the artist Canaletto's Venice canal and plaza scenes.

Gordon Arnott and his wife Alva were on their way out to the coast to enroll in the CMHC initiated and funded Community and Regional Planning program at UBC, headed up by the late Dr. Peter Oberlander. Gordon, myself, Bill Paterson, Gerard Farry and two others received \$5000 CMHC fellowships to take the diploma course that in the second year, morphed into a M.A./M.

Sc. degree. Arnott and I became close personal friends, as we were the only ones trained in drafting and visual depiction of buildings and landscapes. The others had degrees in economics, social work, and physical education. Planning communities was to become more than physical streets and buildings.

Arnott took the first year then went to work for Alcan. He later returned to Regina, and with fellow architect Joe Izumi and engineer Jim Sugiyama, formed a partnership, Izumi Arnott & Sugiyama, Architects Engineers and Town Planners. They designed and built many of the post-war Saskatoon campus buildings: biology, the new library, the student commissary, veterinary college, hospital and the cancer research building, technical trade schools, office buildings, as well as geriatric and mental care hospitals, and homes throughout Saskatchewan. One of the last projects we worked on was the provincial medical services building, the Tommy Douglas Building. It was located directly behind the provincial legislative building. Our firm was the landscape architect

for almost all of these IAS projects, in addition to the University of Saskatchewan campus landscape architects. The site and landscape work tied to each building on the campus was our commission regardless of who was the building architect. It was a great arrangement as we always had our client, the University, on our side, particularly when it came to screening and covering some incompatible building elements. We specified quite a lot of *Parthenocissus cinquefolia* and *P. tricuspidata*.

Waymark, and the publisher Francis Lincoln, have done a fine job of presenting Mawson's Work. Especially, the family heritage plans, full colour pictures, and the end papers that have a spread of eight pages from the Mawson Brothers Catalogue of Garden Furniture showing the garden wares they produced and sold: fencing, wood and wire for espalier; gates, a gate for man and carriage; rose pergolas and festoons; arbors and Dovecotes all bearing the names of gardens that the Mawson firm had designed. It was great recycling of project and garden. The book is available at Hager's Books in Kerrisdale. 



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Universal Design: Seven Principles Toward Inclusion

Donna Rodman, BCSLA Intern


Universal Design is “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Mace 1985). Universal Design, therefore, is not limited to architecture, landscape architecture, or planning. There are a plethora of ergonomic and industrial design disciplines that claim the philosophy for the design of products from cell phones, to integrated signage systems, and even inpatient care rooms. It involves more than usability of products, however, as designers incorporate economic, engineering, cultural, gender, and environmental concerns into their design processes. If a site is inclusive and designed with Universal Design principles, it may earn extra credits in LEED® projects.

In the conceptual design phase, Universal Design is not prescriptive, it is performance driven. Experience working with a variety of different human conditions and abilities helps greatly in designing and understanding the philosophy. One design solution does not fit everyone, and never will. Even amongst consultants, there are multiple definitions of Universal Design. Ask anyone who has worked in focus groups or navigated through a public process with terminology such as barrier-free design, universal accessibility, adaptable design, lifespan design – some definitions are broader, others narrower. Two attributes are true for all: 1. Universal Design is an equitable approach with a focus on social inclusion, and 2. Consensus between user groups, in what is universal or accessible, is simply not possible.

The Center for Universal Design, at North Carolina State University, collaborated with working architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers to publish the *Principles for Universal Design* in December of 1995. The seven principles offer guidelines that do not hinder the initial creative burst of vision. They come with the caveat that all principles may not be relevant

to all sites and all designs. They offer designers guidance to integrate features that meet the needs of as many users as possible. They help to safely coax the designer out of the constraints that are prescribed and yet, the guidelines must be used in conjunction with the British Columbia Building Code, CAN/CSA – B651-04 Accessible Design for the Built Environment, and the Federal Register’s ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Building and Facilities. By the time a designer is midway through a project, all four resources are likely to be at the corner of their workstation.

Every site we encounter is unique and one design approach does not fit every site. The gift of Universal Design is the flexibility the philosophy provides. The challenge we face is being creative and socially responsible enough to interpret the principles (and the prescriptive codes that are informing accessible design) and implement the principles to build inclusive communities.

A community that is planned and designed to accommodate all of its citizens celebrates potential, quality of life, and diversity of ability. That community will benefit enormously from the social and financial benefits when citizens can enter businesses, cross streets, attend games and concerts, explore a park, work together, play together, and be together. Such a community is socially equitable and sustainable, and it will not just survive, but thrive. 

Donna Rodman is the author of Universal Design Guidelines for Outdoor Spaces: Plan and Design for Choice with The Corporation of the District of Maple Ridge and the City of Pitt Meadows Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility Issues. The publication is available as PDF (free download) from the District of Maple Ridge website www.mapleridge.ca or the City of Pitt Meadows website www.pittmeadows.bc.ca. Paper copies are available by emailing enquiries@mapleridge.ca or calling 604-467-7355.

Seven Principles of Universal Design

1. Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

2. Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

3. Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

4. Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.

5. Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

6. Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

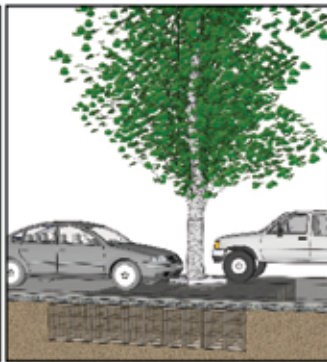
Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user’s body size, posture, or mobility.

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Compiled by advocates of universal design, listed in alphabetical order: Bettye Rose Connell, Milke Jones, Ron Mace, Jim Mueller, Abir Mullick, Elaine Ostroff, Jon Sanford, Ed Steinfeld, Molly Story, and Gregg Vanderheiden

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BCPRODUCTS

MUBI Living Wall System

Living walls are gaining popularity in leaps and bounds, while at the same time opening up a new world of exciting design opportunities for landscape architects. MUBI, a British Columbia based collaborative, is emerging as a leader in regenerative consulting, and the development of their MUBI Living Wall System is making green walls easy to install while improving plant health. Developed by an integrated team of collaborators including an industrial designer, horticulturist, architect, engineer, and waterproofing specialist, the system is entirely designed, developed, manufactured, and pre-grown here in the province.

MUBI is an acronym for “Mycelium Urban Biodiversity Interface”. In our natural world, the mycelium enables a symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi. This matrix facilitates the transfer of salts and minerals to trees, while trees provide photosynthates and water to its fruiting body, the mushroom. Similarly, MUBI fosters mutually beneficial exchanges between the natural world and our built environment by introducing

site specific and regenerative interfaces such as green roofs and living walls.

After comprehensively researching the current technologies on the market, the MUBI Living Wall System was developed to be as ingenious as it is simple. The ergonomically sized modular system is designed to enable easy pre-growing, shipping, and installation. The front and sides of each module are permeable to roots, allowing plants to spread beyond their original propagation panel, rather than becoming root bound. This fundamental property, whereby plants are able to spread throughout the panel, lengthens the original assembly and greatly improves the health of the system and the longevity of the plant community.

This hybrid system (soil based and hydroponic) combines the beneficial aspects of soil organisms with the absorption of a lightweight hydroponic substrate. The installation process is simple, as the panels overlap like shingles, creating a pressure equalizing rain screen that protects the building envelope.



Mubi Living Wall installation.
Image: Geneviève Noël

What is more, the system's integrated irrigation and nutrition system is controlled by a computer and is virtually invisible. Being consistent with their sustainable philosophy, the panels are manufactured here in Vancouver with recycled and regional materials. MUBI is backed by a one-year warranty that includes the first year of maintenance. **51**

For more information contact Geneviève Noël at info@mubi.ca or visit mubi.ca.



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Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion

The completion of the Vancouver Convention Centre West building adds a new level of ecological complexity to the City's urban environment. The facility, which will welcome more than 7,000 media officials during the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, opened in April 2009 and is now being called one of the greenest convention centres in the world.

Completed by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc, the 111,500m² (1,200,000 sq ft) expansion project is LEED® Gold targeted. Sitting on the south shore of the Burrard Inlet, across from Stanley Park, views of North Shore Mountains are celebrated both inside and outside the new architecture. The expansion occurs 60% on land with the remaining 40% built over water. Marine biologists developed a habitat compensation plan built into the building's foundation.

The landscape component accounts for approximately \$14million of the \$883million total project construction cost. Funding sources include the Province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada, Tourism Vancouver, and revenue generated by events at the existing convention centre.

The project's highlight is a 6.5-acre living roof, the largest non-industrial green roof in North America. Only the green roof on the Ford Motor Company Factory's in Michigan is larger. Although the roof is inaccessible to the public, ramped terraces and interior architecture spaces allow visitors direct views to the diverse and ecologically minded planting. Bruce Hemstock, lead landscape architect for the project, remarks "The high profile and significant size of the Living Roof has increased the public's awareness of the need to rethink how we treat our urban environment". The roof is composed of 26 plant species from the pacific northwest region ▶

The largest non-industrial green roof in North America officially opens in downtown Vancouver



1



2

DESIGN TEAM

Landscape Architect

PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc

Architect LMN Architects, DA, and MCM

Civil Engineer Sandwell Engineering Inc

Environmental Biologist Paul Kephart

Irrigation Contractor Active Turf Irrigation

Landscape Contractor Holland Landscapers

Mechanical Engineer Stantec Consulting

Plant supply and Propagation NATS Nursery

Structural Engineer

Glotman Simpson Consulting Engineers Earth Tech (Canada) Inc.

[1] The public plaza features bold architectural lighting, simple paving, and custom wood row-benches

[2] The West building's living roof, with the existing east building's five sails roof in the background



[3] Public plaza connects to the waterfront and seawall



[4] Public plaza with Coal Harbour and Stanley Park in the background. Images: PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc

that combine for a total of 375,000 individual plants. In addition, 40,000 bulbs were planted and 125kg of seed was spread. Inspired by the BC coastal grassland, select plant species include Beach Strawberries, Hookers Onion, Native Sedges, Native Potentilla, and Aster to attract bees.

The roof's 150mm depth growing medium consists of sand, composted organic wood mulch, and a lightweight BC lava rock aggregate. More than 5000m³ of growing medium, with a saturated weight of 39.6 lbs per sq ft, was installed, weighing more than 11 million pounds. The irrigation system features eight moisture sensors and over 60km of drip lines. Though the system will be permanent, it uses cleaned black-water and will only operate during the summer months of June, July, and August. Hemstock notes "This is to ensure that the plants are actively transpiring water, which will significantly help in the cooling and cleaning of the air and building". River rock runnels mimicking meandering streams collect rainwater that is then filtered for sediment and pollutants before being discharged into Coal Harbour.

Beyond the much talked about roof, the landscape features 37,000m² (400,000 sq ft) of

walkways, bikeways, and plazas. A 9,000m² (97,000 sq ft) civic plaza provides the City with new public open space and links to the waterfront seawall. The plaza is detailed with a single style of custom dark wood row-benches, concrete ledges, bold architectural lighting, and a simple paving pattern occasionally interrupted by shallow concrete drainage channels. More than 130,000 sq ft of bike lanes connect across the site and enhance access to the water's edge.

Together the sheer size of the Vancouver Convention Centre's living roof and the surrounding public realm combine to make this one of the most ambitious landscape architecture projects ever completed in British Columbia. Earlier this year the project received the GO GREEN award from the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA). [SL](#)

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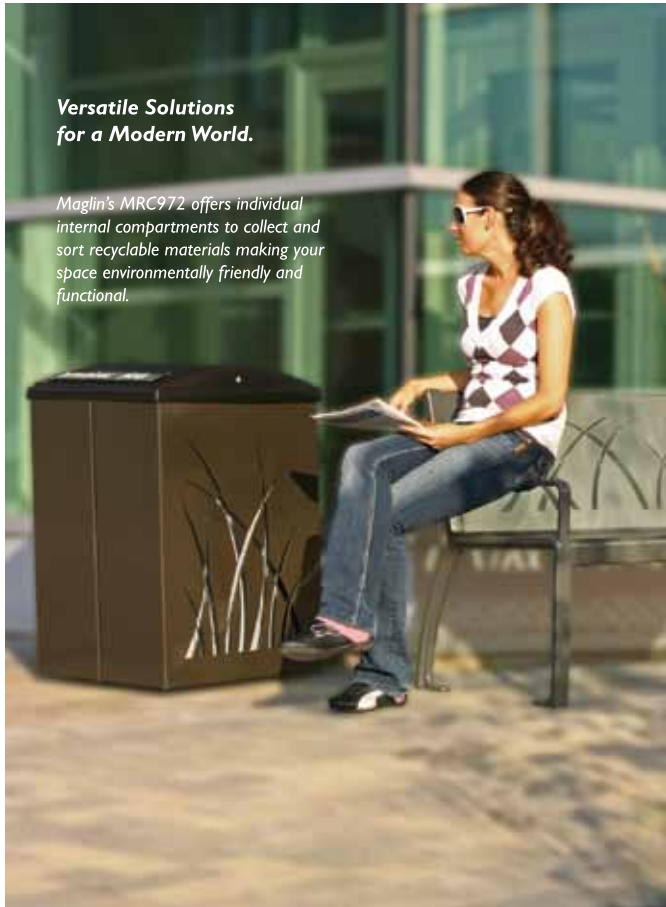
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