

FEBRUARY 2013

# SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



THE INSIDE TRACK ON PUBLIC SECTOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

PARKit: Surrey's Urban Pop-Up Park | Project Profile: Grey Canal and BX Creek Trail Systems |  
Campus Landscape Architect – UBC | Pedaling Together: Developing the Stanley Park Cycling Plan |  
Iron LA: Surrey vs. Vancouver | LAs in Regional Parks... A Different Breed



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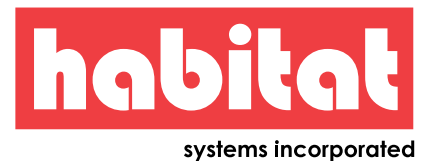
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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.

# THE INSIDE TRACK *on*



## Public Sector Landscape Architecture

By Karen Kristensen, MBCSLA, Park Design  
Planner, District of West Vancouver

**This edition of SITELINES explores multiple dimensions of public sector landscape architecture ranging from planning to design and taking place in regional, municipal, university, urban, and rural settings.**

Roles shift as needed encompassing a broad range of skills and unwavering tenacity as public sector landscape architects advocate for design, the environment and plain common sense as they push projects forward in conditions wrought with politics, delays, and competing interests. In these pages you'll be treated to a lively comparison between Vancouver and Surrey as they run the race to complete projects on paths loaded with obstacles — the obstacles being slightly different in each setting. You'll also see what's popping up in Surrey's urban spaces. You'll learn how implementing a campus plan requires the skills of an orchestral conductor and a strong grip on a vision without boundaries. You'll see how diplomacy, patience, and broad mindedness are essential qualities in landscape architects working at the regional level. Further, you'll see how tricky it can be working on an iconic park with allied professionals who sing off slightly different song sheets. Through all these examples you'll see that innovation and creativity are alive and well in the public sector and that job satisfaction there lies not only in successfully completed projects but also in relationships nurtured along the way. ▶



Cover Image: New facilities at Centennial Beach – Boundary Bay Regional Park. Image courtesy of eta landscape architecture inc.

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Continued from page 3.

## A Little FAN MAIL

The saying “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” is all too true and too frequently uttered in public offices. But everyone once in a while, you hear the sweet sound of appreciation, and on some occasions, feedback comes along where words like “brilliant” and “genius” are aimed at public sector landscape architects. It’s a reminder to aim high. Here is some well earned praise for good park design:

*“As a frequent park user and resident of the neighbourhood — a big thank you for the great job in the redesign and installation of the park. Whoever redesigned it is a genius and there is a constant buzz in the neighbourhood about this new park. It is perfect for the diversity of park users. The playground has interesting features and finally together away from the traffic. The whole thing is brilliant.”*

*“On Sunday I was walking through my neighbourhood and past my neighbourhood park which has been undergoing a significant upgrade. It was great to see even on a cool overcast day, the park was in full use. The renovation of this public amenity is a great boost for this community and is a space the community will take pride in.”*

*“From an architect’s perspective, the re-design of the park is both beautiful and highly functional, taking greatest advantage of the existing landscape. From the perspective of a local resident, it is a much appreciated shot in the arm for our great community. Great job to all involved. I and the citizens of Vancouver and elsewhere look forward to future amazing work. Thank you.” SL*



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# PARKit: Surrey's Urban Pop-Up Park

By Shira Standfield, MBCSLA,  
Civic Beautification Planner, City of Surrey

**Landscape architects in the public sector often have the opportunity to create a sense of place in bleak urban landscapes. In addition to site planning, design development and project management, public sector LAs also work on engaging the public, creating interesting and inspiring places by animating streetscapes, parks, and other spaces. Whether temporary installations or permanent designs, we play an important role in shaping the look and feel of a city, aesthetically and psychologically.**

City Centre, the new downtown core in the City of Surrey is rapidly developing with the upcoming opening of the new city hall and many new condo projects. The SkyTrain station at Surrey Central has become a pedestrian hub with people linking between SFU, the bus loop, Central City Mall, the North Surrey Recreation Centre, and tower developments. This area, however, is located in an area of transition

with a diverse mix of people ranging from commuting students to low income residents. The area has been improving recently in terms of reduced vandalism, graffiti, and other illegal activities.

With few opportunities to sit, meet, or enjoy some greenspace in the downtown core, City staff decided to create a pedestrian-friendly temporary space where people can pause and interact. Small scale, temporary

improvements have been used by major cities in North America and Europe to address similar issues, commonly referred to as “pop-ups”. Community groups are using this strategy as a way to test innovative and creative concepts with minimal risk. Temporary activation of small spaces has shown to foster positive change in communities by bringing in people, investment, and development.



First activation of PARKit – a little bit of Versailles in Surrey.  
Image courtesy of Shira Standfield.

Our project, PARKit, was created in partnership with the City's Parks Planning section and Civic Beautification. The site was activated in the North Surrey Recreation Centre parking lot in April for 12 days and in July for 10 days. PARKit was a 30' x 30' green space located at the intersection of parking lot, bus loop, and SkyTrain station. The site was covered in a square green-coloured faux grass carpet. It was created with modular curved bench pieces shaped to be placed in a variety of configurations to encourage social interaction. A series of seating cubes, also covered in green carpeting helped to create additional seating and play opportunities. Wall wraps with forest imagery covered adjacent Skytrain pillars, planters and large potted trees created a feeling of a garden and an inviting place to hang out. Several parking spots were transformed into a patio with tables, an ideal spot for lunch from one of the visiting food carts. Even right by a parking lot and bus loop, this urban space was covered in people, socializing, eating, and even napping.

PARKit was successful in creating a people node—a place to hang out, meet, read, or listen to music. At lunchtime, dozens of people enjoyed the space and many tweeted that it was, “cool that something original and new was happening in Surrey”. During the 22 days that PARKit was activated there was no observed vandalism, graffiti, or other problems.

A key to the success of PARKit was a combination of site design, programming, and publicity. The site was supported by a number of mobile food vendors which otherwise are not permitted in the City of Surrey. The food carts included El Salvadorian, Chinese, and Vietnamese cuisine, as well as, bubble tea, perogies, BBQ, and gourmet hot dogs. A social media and web campaign on the City's website, Facebook page, and Twitter accounts helped to generate a buzz about the initiative and certainly encouraged more people to visit the site. The site and program helped to create a vibrancy and excitement about the new possibilities for Surrey's developing downtown.

Temporary installations work well with people linked into the social media mindset. The element of surprise, quick installation,



A view of PARKit from the SkyTrain station staircase. Image courtesy of Barry Elliot.

edgy design without financial risk, and fun and faux materials are all important features of these projects. Changing spaces, modular and interactive pieces also seem to engage the public, especially youth. With youth engaged in their cities, a more vibrant and creative street scene can develop.

## Future

We intend to revisit PARKit based on the great online feedback and community interest we received. We are working on creating a yearly contest for designers to

come up with new concepts for this temporary space. In addition, as the other Town Centres develop in City of Surrey, the intent is to work with local business associations and community groups to create inviting temporary social spaces to further promote pedestrian activity and community building. We would love to see PARKit “go viral.”

*Shira Standfield MBCSLA, is the Civic Beautification Planner with the City of Surrey. She has the task of revitalizing areas in decline and engaging people with their communities. 51*

# PROJECT PROFILE:

By Keith Pinkoski, MBCSLA, Parks Planner,  
Regional District of North Okanagan

## Grey Canal and BX Creek Trail Systems

Two regional trail systems, The Grey Canal and BX Creek Trail weave through the Greater Vernon Area. They both provide pedestrians off-road trail connections in a wide array of different contexts and landscapes. These trails vary from elevated boardwalks, to meandering creekside trails, to more challenging valley trails that boast scenic views of both Lake Okanagan, Kal Lake, and the Valley beyond.



### The Grey Canal Trail System

The Grey Canal Trail System was originally part of the largest irrigation district in BC. Constructed in 1905, the Grey Canal was used for moving water from lakes on highlands southeast of Vernon, across the Coldstream Valley, and along the benchlands encircling Vernon to Okanagan Lake. The Canal played a vital role in the subdivision of ranchlands, and the promotion of fruit farming in the valley. The canal was comprised of several different construction techniques including wood and steel flumes, concrete lined ditches and buried

pipelines. It was used for the last time in 1970 due to the rising costs of replacements and repairs to the system. Along much of the route, the remains of the canal and its elaborate system of ditches, pipes, and flumes can still be found. The Regional District of North Okanagan has, and is currently in the process of re-acquiring large portions of the system route for public trail use. Overtime, more sections of trail will be added to ensure this legacy is preserved for appreciation by future generations.



Grey Canal Trail. All images courtesy of Regional District of North Okanagan.





BX Trail Creek System.

## BX Creek Trail System

The BX Creek Trail System originally received its name from the Barnard Express, which in 1864 was the largest freighting company in BC. The express ran stage coaches from the Okanagan Valley to the Cariboo in Central British Columbia. The Barnard Express's main staging area in Vernon was BX Ranch which used the now known BX Creek as a water supply for the wintering horses. Trail users will encounter a range of different terrain along the creek from wetlands and boardwalks along the creek in the low lands, to more rugged sinuous pathways and scoured sections of creek higher up.

Realization of these projects engaged this public sector landscape architect in:

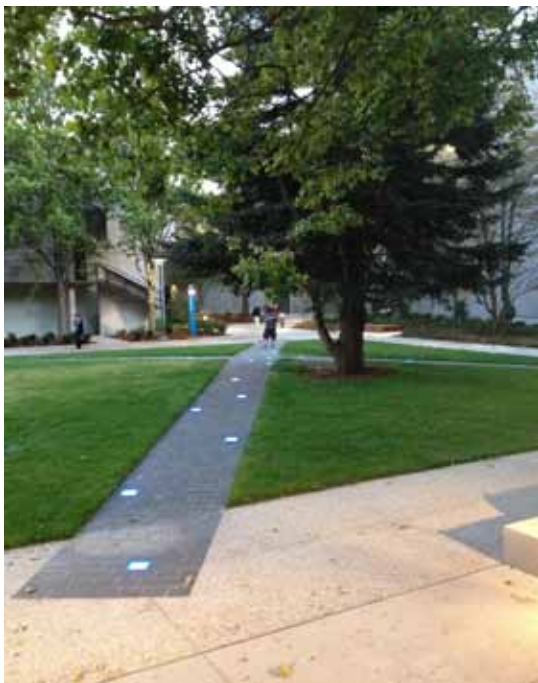
- Land acquisition/Negotiations.
- Notification & submission to provincial regulatory agencies (MoE, DFO, MoT, ALC).
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- Site Supervision. [SL](#)



# Campus Landscape Architect

## University of British Columbia

By Dean Gregory, MBCSLA, ASLA, LEED® AP, UBC Campus Landscape Architect



Health Sciences Courtyard sidewalks. All images courtesy of Dean Gregory.

Perhaps it is just the passing of 20 years but I don't have much recollection of the campus where I got my degree in landscape architecture. I have happy memories of plant identification tours around the University of Guelph campus with Professor Lumis – but not any strong memories of what it looked like or felt like. This contrasts with my fond memories of the University of Toronto campus where I received my undergraduate degree – its ivy-covered buildings, the broad lawn of King's College Circle and the quad at University College to name just a few. My recollection of the important role that the campus landscape played in creating positive and memorable experiences now helps inform my role as Campus Landscape Architect for the University of British Columbia. ▶

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## An Exciting Professional Challenge

Since 2009, my primary responsibility has been to lead the revitalization of the campus through a \$46 million Public Realm Plan. More than a simple beautification project, the plan's objectives are to create a campus landscape that:

- Animates, invigorates, and brings life to campus.
- Enhances the educational experience with outdoor learning opportunities and environments.
- Promotes the sharing of ideas, creative expression, and interaction across disciplines.
- Supports and nurtures the physical and mental health of students, faculty, and staff.
- Instills pride and a strong sense of place.
- Is economically sustainable and well utilized by the community.

One of my chief roles is to foster synergies and opportunities among the many individuals and groups involved in campus decision making. I approve landscape-related development applications in accordance with university policies and guidelines. I also contribute to any policy initiatives related to campus landscape architecture. I am not the designer of the landscape per se, but I do hold the conductor's stick as it were and make sure that everyone is playing the same tune. One of the greatest pleasures of my job is the opportunity to work with many talented private practice landscape architects and architects.

## Collaborating with Experts

Designing and implementing landscape works for a university campus is uniquely challenging.

Especially in the context of a diverse constituency, branding strategy, academic interests, and history, university landscapes are legacy works—they are going to be around for a long time and they are incremental in their effect. Each project is built not only for today but in response to past decisions and for the future.



Buchanan Courtyard stormwater feature.

Each project has an obligation to strengthen the existing fabric of the larger campus landscape. While there are many aspirations—it is important to remember that any one project does not have to be and do everything. Many projects are more about editing and repairing than creating new experiences.

Another unique aspect of project work at UBC is that, unlike a municipality, we have no property lines within our boundaries. This has a big influence on how designers should think about their individual projects. There is an opportunity for consultants to think more broadly and deeply—to look for bigger opportunities and synergies within the larger campus.

The campus community meanwhile is looking at the landscape with a critical eye and a heightened concern about the environment, including energy and materials, storm water management, water usage, irrigation, etc. The challenge is to address these issues with a respect for classic campus typologies, history, and maintenance resources.

## Major Campus Accomplishments. We have achieved a lot in four years:

- Removing road asphalt and curbs on Main Mall, University Boulevard, Agricultural Road, and Memorial Road.
- Transforming the campus core into a pedestrian and bicycle only zone. Enhancing the usability of outdoor spaces by providing furnishings such as tables and a variety of comfortable seating opportunities that enable people to do outdoors as much of what they are doing indoors in as much of the year as possible.
- Adding benches and a water feature on Main Mall, UBC's iconic landscape, transforming a mere right of way into a place to go—a place to talk, relax, read, and celebrate.
- Modeling environmental best practices through beautifully designed storm water management features.



- Working with architects to create greater transparency and physical porosity between buildings and landscape.
- Not least important, we are applying a standard set of hard and soft landscape treatments that has resulted in a sorely needed sense of unity across the campus.

Within this framework, I believe that we are preserving, developing, and celebrating the best aspects of the University.

## An Exciting Future

UBC's campus is young. We are evolving into a beautiful community, a sustainable community, a complete community where people live, study, work, and play. As the dust literally begins to settle on all of the recently completed improvements, I am aware of all the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead—the Sustainable Sites Initiative, LEED® for campuses, regenerative sustainability, consequences from densification, pedestrian/cyclist conflicts, urban agriculture, and irrigation from non-potable sources to name a few. For me, it is a great time to be Campus Landscape Architect. [SL](#)



Top: Main Mall.  
Middle: Beaty Courtyard.  
Bottom: Buchanan Courtyard furnishings.

# Pedaling Together: Developing the Stanley Park Cycling Plan

**Stanley Park is renowned as one of the great parks of the world. With 400 hectares of green space adjacent to Vancouver's downtown core, the park provides a wide variety of experiences to its many visitors. The 8.8 kilometre seawall can draw thousands of pedestrians and cyclists a day and the Stanley Park Causeway, which runs through the park, provides a route between downtown and the North Shore via the Lions Gate Bridge for commuting cyclists, runners, and even some pedestrians. This unique character, location, and regional relevance made the involvement of both public and private sector landscape architects so important in developing a cycling plan for the park.**

In a city where mentioning “bike lane” can raise strong emotions, both positive and negative, and in a park where the mention of removing a dead tree can initiate a committee determined to save it for posterity, we were filled with trepidation. The whisper of “cycling” and “Stanley Park” in the same sentence could easily cause a tempest. We could only hope that it would lead to positive change rather than into the abyss.

Park Board staff had been improving the facilities for cycling in Stanley Park over the years but the park's ever increasing popularity resulted in issues throughout the park. An attempt by staff to plan routes that would allow cyclists to return to the city through the park without having to cycle all around the Seawall unearthed more conflicts than solutions.

This made us recognize that a comprehensive cycling plan was required to look at the entire park and a consultancy was the best way to proceed. It would be daunting: to identify and integrate cycling improvements that encourage increased and improved bicycle access to the park while enhancing the experience of the park for all users, not just cyclists.

There were four phases for Park Board landscape architects in this process. The first was to develop a request for proposals, a process that began in early 2011 with the RFP finally issued in June, 2011.

The RFP generated a lot of interest. A large number of very qualified teams applied so the arduous task of reviewing the extensive proposals took a long time and involved many reviewers, from Engineering and Financial Services as well the Park Board. Coordinating the reviewers was like herding cats, but after deliberating on each proposal for a time equal to the unpaid time devoted by their respective proponents to produce them, consensus was reached. At the same time, a technical steering committee was assembled with representatives from Engineering, Park Rangers, Park Operations, and the Stanley Park Ecology Society to oversee the consultancy and help manage the ongoing public engagement. Getting from recognizing the need for a consultancy to hiring a consulting team took about six months.

The second phase was the consultancy itself. A consultant team led by LEES + Associates (Erik Lees, MBCSLA, Heidi

By Alan Duncan, MBCSLA (Inactive), FCSLA, Environmental Planner, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation *and*

Ben Mulhall, MBCSLA, Catherine Berris Associates, formerly with Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

Redman, MBCSLA, and Katy Amon, BCSLA Intern) with ISL Engineering and Land Services and Drdul Community Transportation Planning was engaged in August 2011.

The role of the landscape architects involved in developing the plan, both civic staff and consultants, was critical in ensuring that recommendations to enhance the cycling experience respected the identity and “sense of place” that is so valued in Stanley Park. Rather than focusing on modal splits or engineering standards, more nuanced recommendations were required for modest interventions that not only minimized negative impacts on other park users but enhanced their experience, safety, and accessibility in the park. A large part of our roles as landscape architects was to ensure that the engineers on the consulting team and in our Engineering Department really appreciated how different Stanley Park was as a context for a cycling plan. It also had to be a plan for pedestrians, for increased accessibility, for greater shared use and for ecological enhancement. It also had to be sensitive to the concerns of everyone who cares so passionately about the park, from local residents, occasional visitors, tourists, nature enthusiasts (and wildlife), as well as self-identified pedestrians, drivers and recreationalist, and competitive and commuter cyclists.

Working together on this project was great. The consultants and staff worked in a close

and happy collaboration on all aspects of the project. Meaningful input was sought from the public. Two simultaneous open houses were held in Stanley Park on a sunny September weekend to observe behaviours and solicit input from the public in addition to a social media strategy. The consultants, staff, and steering committee participated in three “ride-abouts” in the park in order to identify and analyze areas of concern and to discuss and proof possible solutions. Although enjoyable (even in the rain), these rides were more than just pleasant jaunts through the park. They were attended by park rangers and members of the Ecology Society who participated in sharing information, perspectives, and suggesting and testing ideas. It was an opportunity for learning for all participants, which enriched the plan proposals. The final draft evolved through an iterative process with the consulting and staff landscape architects fine tuning the recommendations to ensure they provided solutions that reflected the ecological sensitivity and social values of the park. It was very rewarding to work together so intensively with our private sector colleagues.

The Stanley Park Cycling Plan is a major accomplishment with over sixty phased recommendations ranging from simple quick fixes to more complex capital-intensive projects, addressing a wide array of concerns around cycling in the park. The third phase of work for staff was to evaluate those recommendations to determine how to best implement them in a fiscally responsible way and to seek approval from the Board to do so. The Implementation Strategy was drafted by staff to be a living document to realize the intentions of the Cycling Plan while giving comfort to the Board and everyone concerned about the park that staff will report back to them as appropriate on projects requiring further study or extraordinary capital funding. This will allow for further consideration and community engagement as projects proceed and concepts become a reality.

Implementation, the final phase of the project, was already underway as the implementation strategy was being drafted. Staff landscape architects collaborated with engineering and park operations staff to implement relatively low-cost recommendations where opportunities presented themselves, even prior to formal approval of the plan.

Operating at different levels is one of the more gratifying aspects of public sector work. While working at a very conceptual level, you can also be on the ground getting things built. Beyond being incredibly flexible, the Public Sector Landscape Architect needs many skills, including the abilities to nudge, negotiate, coerce, plead, lead, convince, and sometimes duck and cover, in order to flourish. It is the variety and the unique challenges that make it all worthwhile.

Having the opportunity to collaborate with our private sector counterparts allows us to share a valuable array of knowledge, experience, and creativity. Working together leads to successful projects, professional improvement, and in some cases, lasting friendships. And if things go wrong, it’s always nice to have someone else along when being drawn into the abyss.

*The Park Board adopted the Stanley Park Cycling Plan and approved the implementation strategy on October 15, 2012. Both can be accessed under Documents at [www.vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/stanley-park-cycling-plan](http://www.vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/stanley-park-cycling-plan). <sup>51</sup>*



Consultants and technical committee members on a ride about in the park. Image courtesy of Richard Drdul.



Left and right: Grandview Park (van der Zalm + associates inc. and David Yurkovich, BLA, Park Board). Completed in 2011. Images courtesy of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

# IRON LA: Surrey vs. Vancouver

Welcome to Studio Stadium where Landscape Architects go head to head to determine the champions of Landscape Architecture. Today's challenger is Ted Uhrich, Manager of Parks Planning, Research and Design, from the City of Surrey vs. our Public Sector Iron LA, Tiina Mack, Manager of Park Development at the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. This is definitely a battle of up and comer vs. established veteran: Surrey vs. Vancouver – Studio Stadium style!

By Ted Uhrich, MBCSLA, Manager of Parks Planning, Research and Design, City of Surrey *and*

Tiina Mack, MBCSLA, Manager of Park Development, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

## The Chair reveals the secret ingredient: Public Process!

What a challenge, Vancouver with its AAA, “aged for 28 days” neighbourhoods and very “tangy” community groups. Surrey with its “retropolitan” highway oriented dining offset by a multitude of cultural cuisines from every corner of the world.

The challenger from Surrey throws open the contest by cutting a ball of red tape and discarding the innards in the Fraser River. The Iron LA attempts a similar maneuver but is dwarfed by the size of the ball and instead rolls it into a dark corner of the studio... It sits quietly in the corner occasionally calling out “Number 956, please proceed to the front counter, Number 956.”

In a move that is either incredibly bold or insane, the Challenger attempts building the project without a public meeting. The public goes crazy! His only explanation to the camera, “The funding from the Province was only available until the end of March and I have forty more projects to complete by the end of next week.” He throws out the work to date and starts from the beginning.

Meanwhile on the Iron LA's side of the studio, an intense community focus group led by a pricy independent facilitator is in full swing. Community members keep repeating, “We are the crème de la crème,” but are politely ushered to the sidelines; despite the facilitator's best efforts, this meeting ends in a stalemate and the project is temporarily delayed.

The Challenger has reengaged the public and is seeing some benefits, unfortunately the discussion gets sidetracked by concerns about the number of parking spots residents have for their home and the fact there are ten portables at the local school that opened ten months ago. He resorts to a cleverly worded feedback form: “Are you not sure that you do not support this project? Yes or No?”

The Iron LA proceeds to the Park Board with a completed conceptual design and recommendation to proceed to detailed design. Oh no! The report is deferred due to a contentious community garden with 250 members of the public speaking to the issue!

The Challenger proceeds to the Parks, Recreation and Sport Tourism Committee.



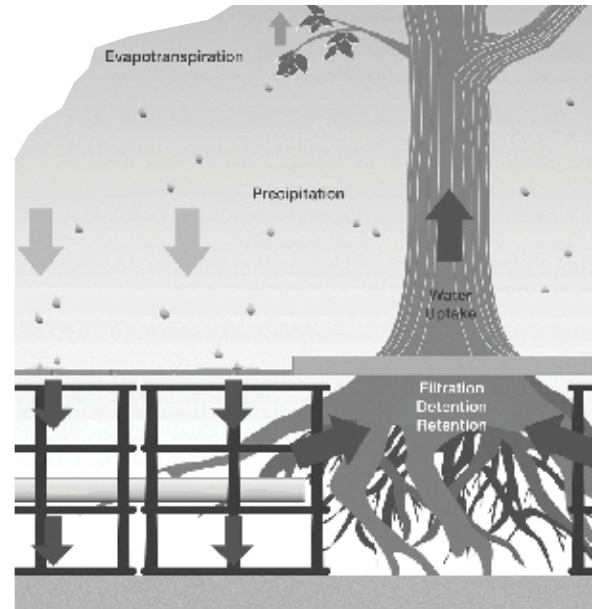
Emery Barnes Phase 3 (Jonathan Losee Ltd. and Joe McLeod, MBCSLA, Park Board). Completed Spring 2012.

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Oh no! It's referred back to staff to determine what the implications to hotel revenues are and whether they can be increased with the inclusion of artificial turf.

The Iron LA is back on the Park Board agenda and five members of the national media attend the meeting. The decision will be dissected on the radio tomorrow morning. The Board approves the project contingent on each of the residents receiving a carrot from the community garden.

The Challenger begins detailed design and it looks nothing like the approved plan. He is heard muttering, "It's only a concept." He is momentarily distracted by a request to include a pet cemetery but is able to sidestep the request with an obtuse reference to Provincial Legislation.

The Iron LA proceeds to detailed design. Suddenly the massive ball of red tape re-emerges from the sidelines and demands she apply for a development permit. Oh

no, that's going to set her back. A hastily convened meeting of senior management sorts out the permit approval process and the Iron LA is back on track, as long as she includes a bike lane in the design.

The Challenger completes the project with 10 minutes to spare as a result of ignoring the input of Park Operations Staff. The microphone picks him up saying, "Why do I need anti-theft hardware? The community loves this project..."

The Iron LA carefully prepares a ribbon and stages the project for a grand opening with an elaborate cake while the ball of red tape burps in the background.

*Who is the master of Studio Stadium?  
You decide...*

Joking aside, these park managers revel in the commonalities and differences of working in these communities.

In Vancouver the strength of an independent

Park Board to secure, design, and maintain public spaces results in a world-class park system that contributes to the City's livability. Vancouver takes an international perspective on park design, is often the first to introduce new forms of recreation (e.g. parkour, padel, or street soccer) and hosts a myriad of public art and cultural events within parks. Vancouver is the most populous city in the region and receives a high degree of scrutiny from its residents and the media.

With a land area as big as Vancouver, Burnaby, and New Westminster combined, Surrey has an enviable, interconnected natural area system, large protected Agricultural Land Reserve, and a lean and dedicated municipal organization. Surrey often leads by example in its strategic planning for park amenities (e.g. bicycle recreation, environmental guidelines, and dog off leash area plans), has great nature trails, secret gardens, and is building a new downtown south of the Fraser River. [SL](#)

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# LAs in Regional Parks...

## A Different Breed

By Adam Vasilevich, MBCSLA,  
Park Planner, Metro Vancouver

There are five landscape architects working at Metro Vancouver today (and 3 more who are trained or educated as LAs) who are busy planning for a growing and changing region in the Metropolitan Planning, Environment and Parks Department. It takes humour, great listening skills, and a desire for finding and creating connections, tenacity, tact, and patience to do what we do. We're a passionate bunch who care about the land and people.

It takes humour, great listening skills, and a desire for finding and creating connections, tenacity, tact, and patience to do what we do. We're a passionate bunch who care about the land and people. We face some unique challenges to manage, develop, and plan distinctive facilities such as: a very popular and well established clothing optional beach, an airpark (what is an air park?), fish hatcheries, urban farms, and back country trails. We also tackle issues commonly found in parks like conflicts between people and dogs, bears, bicycles, and horses and the increased pressures on existing facilities from a growing population.





Proximity of new playground to new facilities at Centennial Beach. Image courtesy of Metro Vancouver.



Foreground – Matsqui Trail Regional Park. Background – Sumas Mountain Interregional Park. Image courtesy of Metro Vancouver.

Our work has a focus on the protection of representative landscapes in the region and opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature study, and community stewardship. Most people have been to one of the popular regional parks like Pacific Spirit, Capilano River, or Belcarra but are unaware that Metro Vancouver has 23 regional parks, 5 greenways, 3 park reserves, and 2 ecological conservancies that protect over 14 million hectares and

welcome over 10 million visitors a year. Park visitors are invited to experience activities such as camping, beachcombing, or horseback riding that are not possible in many public spaces in the region. Park programs and community events offer experiences to connect and learn about nature with guided tours, hiking groups, or events like Country Celebration.

The range of scale in planning and design

work that we do reflects the diversity of regional parks and landscapes found throughout the region. This diversity keeps us engaged as we meet and work with new people and different communities on each project. The following examples provide a snapshot of the variety and complexity of current work.

The Experience the Fraser Canyon to Coast trail project envisions 550 kilometres of trails (existing and proposed) and a Fraser River Blueway connecting a network of amenities and points of interest, adding strength to local tourist and economic development through the most densely populated regions in the province. With the concept plan now approved and two demonstration projects complete, a series of initiatives are ready to move ahead in 2013. Its success to date has only been possible through collaboration with municipalities, First Nations, and stakeholders along the route. This project is one example of how Metro Vancouver looks at recreation and significant experiences from a landscape scale, beyond municipal boundaries to consider interregional initiatives in support of inter-connected networks. Another example ▶



New facilities at Centennial Beach - Boundary Bay Regional Park. Credit: Image courtesy of eta landscape architecture inc.

is the recent creation of the first “interregional” park on Sumas Mountain that will be jointly managed with the Fraser Valley Regional District.

Smaller site specific planning and design work is often the place where the challenges of balancing natural resources and ecological services with recreation needs of the residents of the region become apparent. Two examples are the plan for Matsqui Trail Regional Park and the redevelopment of new facilities at Centennial Beach day use area at Boundary Bay Regional Park.

The management plan for Matsqui Trail Regional Park seeks to establish the program, services, and development and conservation priorities for the park over the next 20 years. The park is located in a rapidly growing community and includes the majority of the City of Abbotsford’s waterfront. Up to 400,000 people visit this park annually for the trails, salmon and sturgeon fishing, Fraser River, and agricultural views. The park has room to expand in response to a growing region but not without challenges which include flooding, erosions, and the agricultural-recreational interface. The draft plan will be complete in early 2013 and establishes a vision for the park as the connective thread weaving together layers of recreation, ecology, agriculture, and culture to create a diverse, resilient, and accessible landscape.

Significant redevelopment projects test

regional park planning work on the ground and often receive the greatest amount of local interest. Recent redevelopment at the Centennial Beach area of Boundary Bay includes a new playground, a washroom/change room/café complex and an upgraded entry and parking area. The Metro Vancouver Landscape Architect was the Project Manager for the extent of the three year redevelopment process from project development to construction. This broad role was involved with securing leases, covenants, development permits, and approvals to working with the community and a consultant design team from concept to detailed design. One design challenge was to increase the habitat diversity and ecological function of the existing park space with the addition of green infrastructure such as bioswales, a green roof, and native plantings. A focus on facility accessibility will meet current needs and allow more people to enjoy the ocean beach setting and kilometres of hiking and cycling trails in the future. The redevelopment process also tested a management plan objective to intensify human activity to preserve the majority of the park area as wildlife habitat. Public outreach with Delta staff assistance allowed recent changes to be accepted and embraced by the community.

We often collaborate with other LAs in the public sector as our municipal counterparts understand and experience common issues

or partner with them to manage regional resources. We also hire numerous private landscape architect firms to help us study everything from recreation demand and supply to urban farms, and design trails and wildlife features. Without the help of our public sector colleagues our job would be much harder. These interactions are typically informal or are project based. There have been some formal meetings to share common experiences in the past and hopefully more in the future! In the end, it is our care for the land and the relationships we develop with communities and other professionals that make our jobs rewarding. We are grateful for the relationships we maintain with fellow public sector landscape architects. Together with collaboration from LAs from the private sector, we all strive to create a robust and accessible public realm that we can proudly share with our neighbours, families, and visitors, allowing them to be active and stay healthy. [SL](#)



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