

JUNE 2013

SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



LEGACY

Q&A with Charles Birnbaum | The Neglect of Vancouver's Tree and Landscape Heritage | Q&A with Dominic Cole |
Hidden Intelligence: Preserving Historic Settlement Patterns | Q&A with Chris Wiebe | Q&A with Scot Hein |
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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.



LEGACY

By Donald Luxton, FRAIC, CAHP

As we struggle with issues surrounding the development of sustainable and livable cities, heritage and environmental conservation have become overlapping concerns. This should not be a surprise, as they have grown from the same roots.

Ideas regarding heritage legacies were debated by academics during the 19th Century, the result of the monumental impacts of the Industrial Revolution, but the conservation movement was fully spawned by the physical devastation of Europe during World War I. The Athens Charter of 1931 defined the basic principles of restoration and preservation of ancient buildings, but it was the even more massive destruction of World War II, and the growing capacity of technology to destroy the planet that provoked an even broader discussion about conservation, and even human survival, in the postwar era.

By the 1960s, we began to notice terrific strains on the natural environment. Pollution, acid rain, and depleting resources were the warning signals, and Rachel Carson's landmark *Silent Spring* in 1962 helped launch the environmental conservation movement. This paralleled another remarkable book published just one year earlier, Jane Jacob's *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a damning critique of 20th Century urban planning and a plea for the importance of our historic architecture. In the United States, other remarkable advocates for urban heritage such as Ada Louise Huxtable, and a growing desire to preserve Civil War battlefields, marked a turning point in our understanding of the critical value of all manner of cultural landscapes. ▶

In this Issue:



Cover Image: The old has to make way for high density new urban developments in Beijing. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.

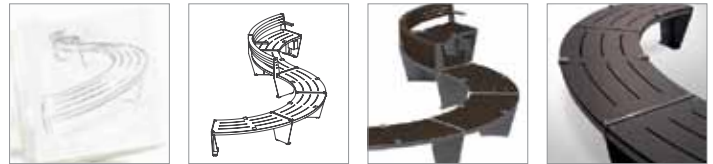
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Continued from page 3.

We now recognize that our shared heritage is much broader and deeper than just saving old buildings. It encompasses the spaces and places between buildings, the layering of urban and rural contexts, intangible cultural heritage, and our many inherited landscapes. We are watching the dire predictions of these early advocates beginning to come true, and it is now our responsibility to rethink the planning practices of our own generation. How we respond to these challenges will surely define our own legacy. **SL**

Donald Luxton, FRAIC, is the President of the Heritage Vancouver Society, which acts as the voice of heritage in Vancouver through education and advocacy. For more information, visit <http://heritagevancouver.org>.



This issue of Sitelines is Guest Edited by Heritage Vancouver with Atelier Anonymous: Alyssa Schwann, ASLA, Jan Haenraets, PhD, and Ariel Vernon. Jan is a Landscape Architect in Europe, Conservation Specialist, Environmental Advisor, and the former Head of Gardens and Designed

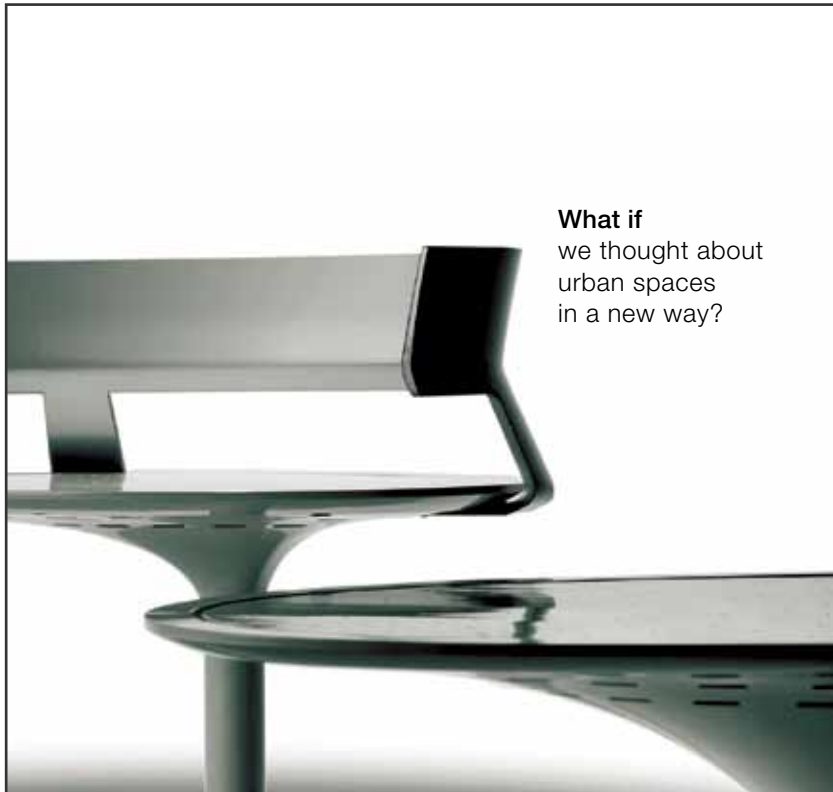
Landscapes of the National Trust for Scotland. Alyssa is an Environmental Designer, with experience in the United Kingdom working on historically-listed parks and gardens, and currently holds an Assistant Professor position in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba.

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Charles Birnbaum

on the Value of Heritage and Landscape Architecture in Cities

By Jan Haenraets, PhD, MA, BLArch, Dipl. Env. Studies

SITELINES: *What are successful examples of rehabilitation and conservation of historic urban areas?*

Charles Birnbaum: One of the leading examples, and perhaps the most high profile, is the High Line in New York, which has become an international sensation drawing millions of visitors annually, has sparked the imagination of urban planners globally and, most significantly, demonstrates an extraordinary integration of historic preservation, design, and horticulture. I am hopeful that this interdisciplinary approach will become a model for other urban planners and projects.

SL: *What is worth conserving in the urban environment?*

CB: What is worth conserving presupposes there is some sort of agreed upon value system by which to make determinations. In my experience, landscapes are either invisible or viewed as places to put stuff. The pioneering modernist landscape architect Thomas Church once wittily characterized the relationship and perception of landscape architecture to architecture as “parsley around the roast” (implying second-class status for both landscape architecture and parsley). That’s one of the reasons I founded The Cultural Landscape Foundation, to provide people with the tools to see, understand and value landscape architecture and its practitioners much as we’ve learned to do with buildings and their designers. With that knowledge and sensitivity we can develop a value system that is more holistic.

SL: *Do you believe heritage receives plenty of attention in cities?*

CB: Again, this deals with issues of value. Some aspects of heritage, particularly architectural, have broader recognition and greater constituencies, which means higher public visibility and, seemingly, a greater level of protection. There are exceptions. Presently,

the most glaring is the decision by New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to demolish the 12-year-old neighbouring Folk Art Museum designed by Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, which they acquired not too long ago. The situation is all the more controversial, and ironic, given the MoMA’s strong focus on design. Following a huge outcry, MoMA announced they had brought on the architecture firm of Diller, Scofidio + Renfro to examine options for adaptively reusing the former Folk Art Museum building. Perhaps you can say I am jealous because I don’t know that a threat to a recently completed work of landscape architecture would have yielded the same level of outrage.

SL: *How can the urban pattern and tissues of historic city areas be preserved in the face of necessary upgrading and land use changes?*

CB: As part of my work, I provide technical assistance to cities, colleges, and municipalities, among others – and a key concept I discuss is change and continuity, which is especially critical when the all too familiar battle lines are drawn between preservationists and planners. What is a particular site’s carrying capacity for change? At what point in a

revitalization project does a design become fatally compromised? The City of Fresno, California, in a bid to revitalize their downtown, is currently determining how much of the six-block pedestrian Fulton Mall, a modernist work by Garrett Eckbo, should be opened to vehicular traffic. I believe automobiles can be accommodated at some streets, but opening up all the streets would essentially destroy this work.

SL: *What do you see as important challenges or issues for heritage and landscapes in cities?*

CB: This gets back to values and among the most critical is authenticity. Some years ago the Smithsonian Institution did a user survey to understand what visitors wanted – the overwhelming response was to see “the real thing.” For Smithsonian visitors, the authenticity of those real things is a value, which is something they learned. My goal with The Cultural Landscape Foundation is to extend that collective value system to fully include landscape architecture and its practitioners. This is especially tricky in cities, which are constantly facing development pressures. A designed landscape may or may not be changed, altered or even removed, but we can’t make responsible stewardship decisions about it if its authenticity isn’t recognized, hence the Foundation’s mission of “stewardship through education.” **SL**

Charles Birnbaum, FASLA is the Founder and President of The Cultural Landscape Foundation.



Fulton Mall, Fresno, California. Photo by Tim Davis. Image courtesy of The Cultural Landscape Foundation.

The Neglect

By Clive L. Justice, PhD, LMBCSLA, FCSLA

of Vancouver's Tree and Landscape Heritage



The variety of large Beech, *Fagus*, including purple-leaf weeping, fern leaf, and rosea, as well as elms, maples, Katsuras, magnolias, and the oldest and largest, big tree, *Sequoia Dendron giganteum*, in Vancouver along Granville Street and in front gardens on West 49th Avenue from Oak Street to SW Marine Drive is representative of the great diversity of tree species that can be grown in Vancouver. The writer has always fancied it as his own private arboretum. Image courtesy of Clive L. Justice.

Wide boulevard streets, continuous urban landscapes, and gardens were feature concepts in Vancouver's town plan proposed by Harland Bartholomew in 1929 and again in 1940. Trees along streets and landscaped front gardens were not something imposed by Bartholomew upon the city however, for Vancouver, was already then a city of heritage trees and gardens. People like Raoul Robillard, MBCSLA #034 (deceased), and his father landscaped and planted trees and made gardens around the homes in the West End in the period just before and during World War I. Today, there are several West End Heritage houses but not one garden designated heritage.

Following the Robillards there was University of British Columbia's new campus landscape architect and Professor of Horticulture, Frank Buck with landscape-enlightened architect George Thornton Sharp, who, having won the competition for the design of the University campus jointly formed the Point Grey Advisory Town Planning Commission: the first in Canada. One of their chief aims was to beautify Point Grey's residential development planting trees along the municipality's streets. Some of this landscape legacy remains to this day, such as the maple and oaks along each side of the Arbutus Street tracks. The single row of maples on the east side of the tracks between 45th and 49th Avenue and the avenue of oaks and maples on both sides of the tracks from 41st to 45th Avenue are but two still remaining examples. In 1924 the Point Grey Municipal Hall faced this avenue of trees. The Hall is long gone but the trees still flourish.

A third example of a pre-Bartholomew trees and garden city concept is the magnificent avenue of *Liriodendrons* and majestic-leaved *Catalpas* with their clusters of orchid like flowers lining 10th Avenue from Dunbar Street to Kitsilano High School. There are others, such as the pre World War I "Loudian" forest grove in Clark Park off Commercial Drive, the City's first park and the Thornton

Park trees on Main Street. It is a shameful oversight that none of these grove and boulevard legacies have achieved heritage urban landscape recognition or status by Vancouver's Heritage Commission.

In 1938, Vancouver was fortunate to gain landscape architect William (Bill) Livingston as Parks Foreman with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, who, over the next 36 years created, built, and managed the physical park system in the city. He oversaw the development of more than 30 of Vancouver's parks, beaches, recreation grounds, playing fields, display gardens, treed streets, and boulevards. He also carried on the tradition of the tree shaded wide median and tree-lined residential streets concepts of the Bartholomew plan. Bill Livingston died in 1990 leaving us, in Vancouver and British Columbia one of the greatest legacies of treed park landscapes and treed streets of any city in the North America. He is hardly remembered and little honoured by his fellow landscape architects and almost forgotten by the Park's Board and city he served for over 40 years.

Cambie Heritage Boulevard and Queen Elizabeth Park and arboretum were among Bill Livingston's special creations. The Vancouver Heritage Commission should highlight the Queen Elizabeth Park arboretum and the

quarry display garden to create Vancouver's and Canada's first heritage urban forest landscape. Groves, newly planted and replacement trees throughout the parks and open spaces throughout the city could be named in honour of Vancouver's landscape pioneers.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a small group of new professionals formed the BC Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA). We met monthly in a Kerrisdale restaurant on West Boulevard. Our main objective was to gain the provincial registration and licensing of our profession, but we also looked to ways that we could provide some service to the city. It took nearly 15 years, but in 1982 our idea of creating a Heritage tree inventory for Vancouver finally gained traction with a grant from the BC Heritage Trust. In excess of 150 trees were identified with aspects of the tree's horticultural history noted as well as stories commemorating, births and marriages related to the trees.

Today, Vancouver has a digital tree inventory that locates and identifies every tree on every street along with ornamentals in the city's parks. It was developed primarily as a tool to track the management and continuing maintenance of this half billion dollar city resource that contributes beauty and helps provide a healthy environment for living in the city. Here is an opportunity to extend and ►



Late blooming, the Korean Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*, does well in Vancouver's cool cloudy climate. On Cambie Street Heritage Boulevard, they line the west sidewalk from West 49th Avenue south to Marine Drive. Along with other Dogwoods, *Cornus florida* in white and pink forms, our native, *C. nuttalli*, the Pacific dogwood and its locally created hybrid Eddies White Wonder Dogwood. the best street to see White Wonder is the two blocks of West 57th Avenue before SW Marine Drive. The Korean Dogwood has dark red seeds as big as strawberries and fiery Autumn colour as do all the dogwoods. Image courtesy of Clive L. Justice.

expand this heritage designation to additional trees such as the large elm on the corner of Arbutus Street and York Avenue, to the magnificent Lawson's Cypress on 16th Avenue just east of Arbutus Street, or to the 100 year old Golden Cypress and Birch boulevard on 15th Avenue.

Throughout Vancouver in every neighbourhood there are street trees, groves, and specimen trees with distinctive natural beauty. The two blocks of Liquidamber trees in Marpole that have fall leaf colour so intense as to out do the fabled maples of the Gatineau

Hills spring to mind. Every neighbourhood could participate in selecting their favourite trees, and these could be celebrated by the City of Vancouver's Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department Public Art Program by including this information in their mapping of public art in the Vancouver's Downtown, for example. This information, useful for our visitors, will also serve as a reminder to those of us who call Vancouver home that we are the stewards of one of the greatest treasures of living art. The BCSLA, in tribute to its founding goals, has a role to play in all of these initiatives. **SL**

Clive L. Justice, PhD, LMBCSLA, FCSLA, IDS, ARS Gold Medal, is a Landscape Architect, Park Planner, Urban-Amenity Forester (retired), and Landscape, Ornamental Garden Tree, Plant & Rhododendron Historian.

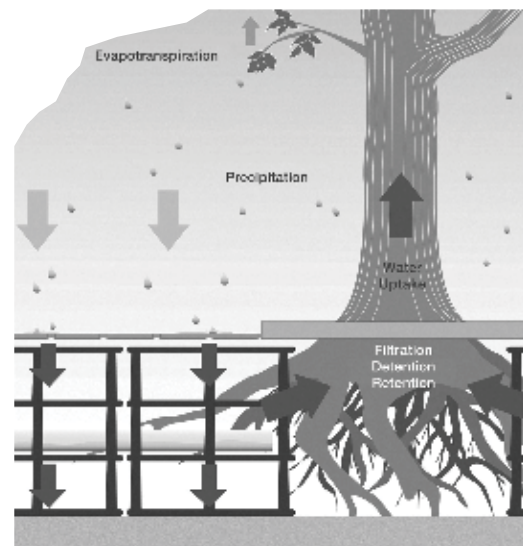
1. "Loudian" is the author's term used to describe this park. J. C. Loudon and his wife Mrs. Loudon edited a journal called *The Garden*. Loudon wrote an encyclopedia of gardening, landscaping, and horticulture, etc., which he recommended planting woodlands of many different species of trees both coniferous and deciduous varieties (one or two of each, mostly exotic species that had been newly introduced to the UK, including Douglas fir, Colorado Spruce, and Lawson's Cypress).



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Dominic Cole

Reflects on the Will of the UK Public and their Passion for Landscape and Heritage

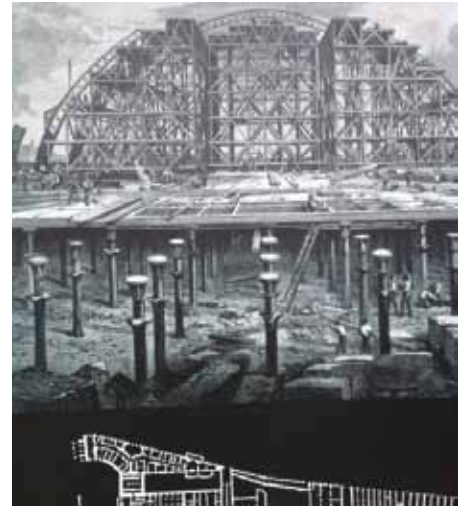
By Jan Haenraets, PhD, MA, BLArch, Dipl. Env. Studies

SITELINES: *How can landscape contribute towards liveable and sustainable cities?*

Dominic Cole: On a visit to a local authority high rise housing estate in East London, home to some 500 residents in a fairly run-down area, I met a resident who started a community garden five years ago. She is a vibrant tour de force and truly inspirational to the growers she works with. Together they share the cultivation, maintenance, and harvest, with excess crops sold in local shops, raising money for next year's seed. This inspirational lady reminded me that at any scale, cities can be liveable and sustainable.

SL: *What are some of the major achievements in London regarding heritage and sustainable open spaces?*

DC: St. Pancras International Station sits right next to Kings Cross Station. These Victorian termini were built by different rail companies and competed for customers – in part by offering stunning architecture and facilities. By the 1960s both stations were looking very tired and incremental functional accretions masked their original splendour. St. Pancras was saved from demolition by the poet and architectural historian, John Betjeman, who loved the camp Victoriana at a time when the



Photograph of an interpretation board at King's Cross Station in London illustrating the construction of the station. Image courtesy of Dominic Cole.

style was deeply unpopular. During the last 12 years I have witnessed a magnificent transformation of both the buildings and the web of streets and space around them. The historic fabric has been revealed by stripping away the accumulation of additions, using ▶

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a very light touch so that the patina of age can still be read alongside brilliant insertions of modern architecture. It has become a destination and demonstrates the very best of handling urban open space.

SL: *How important is the role of Landscape Architects in making liveable and sustainable cities?*

DC: Every few years someone reinvents a name for the outdoor spaces in cities: public realm; urban fabric; green space; etc. The creation of sub-divisions within the profession is divisive and weakens the argument that landscape architects can handle external space. The “new” names suggest that a new type of professional is needed to deal with these expert areas, but Landscape Architecture is an appropriately skilled profession to cover all of these concepts and handle the outside space. We are still often viewed as a slightly annoying add-on to a multidisciplinary team – some-

thing you “have to have” because it is a planning requirement rather than recognizing and valuing the skills we bring. Architects believe they can handle outdoor space planning – very few can. They do not understand connectivity, levels, and that a vast array of steps does not make an amphitheatre.

SL: *How can political support be generated and maintained for heritage and landscape conservation?*

DC: First we need to distinguish between politicians and the political will of the public. Politicians come and go and heritage or landscape are not vote winners, so any time spent lobbying a single politician will only bring short term benefits. Politicians might say they are supporting our heritage, but their short time in power means these words are pretty weightless. It is only through public support, interest, and outrage of caring individuals that consistent attention will be paid to the

places we hold dear. In the UK, the best way to influence in these areas is to rely on the eccentricities of the British public who, fortunately, have a diverse range of passions, time to give, and steely determination. In the UK the conservation movement took off at the end of the 1800s when urban expansion threatened green space and historic fabric. One of the first organizations was the National Trust who now have some 4 million supporters. Today some 12 voluntary run Amenity Societies work closely together under the banner “Heritage Link”. The national body responsible for heritage is English Heritage who are constantly underfunded and work closely with these volunteer groups. **SL**

Dominic Cole is the Chairman of the Garden History Society and The National Trust Gardens Advisory Panel and is the Director at Dominic Cole Landscape Architects Ltd. in London, UK.

HIDDEN INTELLIGENCE:

Preserving Historic Settlement Patterns

By Erick Villagomez, B.Arch Sc., M.Arch

Humanity’s collective drive towards urbanization within the past century has gone hand-in-hand with the mindless erasure and destruction of past urban environments. Historic preservation of historically significant architecture and districts has helped to curb this tide, yet the prevalent modes of preservation tend to focus on buildings, often at the exclusion of the underlying historic settlement patterns that inform a city’s historical development.

These patterns – much like the architecture that encloses the places we inhabit – have a logic and intelligence, founded in the socio-cultural values and geography of a particular place. They contribute to the organizational systems that underlie our settlements by dictating public space and street dimensions as well as lot and block sizes. They also reveal how our ancestors’ social and cultural values were embedded within their collective context and used to live harmoniously with one another and their surrounding environments.

With the unparalleled power of contemporary civilization to rapidly alter the landscape and build at ever-increasing scales, the erasure of

the underlying pattern of countless settlements has never been so prevalent. Their destruction is, in fact, encouraged within the culture of how we currently build. Large block and multi-block development and lot amalgamations, for example, characterize today’s construction practices as financial concerns are translated into building regulations.

When these patterns are destroyed, we lose much more than sites of antiquarian interest. We lose sight of a way of city building that is increasingly relevant to the goals and ambitions of contemporary urbanism. More specifically, these sites which demonstrate an environmental intelligence and connection

to the surrounding landscape and climate that we are currently striving to re-establish, are valuable examples of human-scaled settlement that promote human well-being and comfort, and foster the creation of resilient, adaptable communities through the small dimension of their city structure.

Environmental Intelligence

One of the most significant values of historic settlements is that all facets of their creation have an intimate relationship with their surrounding natural contexts. The form and layout of the street, lot and block systems all responded to topography, solar exposure, soils, and other climatic phenomena.

We can look to the well-known ancient Greek “solar city” of Priene (400 BCE), for example, to learn how a gridded block pattern, integrated with the surrounding topography and positioned according to solar orientation, set the foundation for an architecture that brilliantly reconciles human use with solar exposure.

The historic fabrics of Eastern settlements show similar characteristics. The hidden urban structure that supports the architecture of Old City Beijing, for example, was carefully calibrated to balance socio-cultural needs with the realities of its natural context. In real terms, the architectural order of courtyard buildings and the urban pattern they created, crystallized social structure, cultural values, urban structure, built ▶

form, climate, and geography into a cohesive whole. Several other non-orthogonal cities such as Tunis, Tunisia and Mardin, Turkey also demonstrate an intelligent integration with the surrounding natural environment.

As a shelter for environmental intelligence rooted in sustainable practices and a connection to surrounding environmental systems, the urban framework of our older settlements offers a valuable repository of concealed wisdom worth learning from, emulating, and building upon based on our newly acquired knowledge of the many different environments around the world. Our growing awareness of the nuances of climate and geological processes – among others – can and must be integrated with the keen observations and built practices of the past.

Human Scale

There is a growing awareness in city planning best practices that the scale and grain of a city's inhabited spaces is critical to human comfort and well-being, and that this, in turn, is closely related to the underlying structure of its form. Although the specific measures of length and land subdivision in historic cities were often idiosyncratic, derived from anthropomorphic units of lengths (the Egyptian cubit for example), or from context specific behaviors such as walking or farming (the 15 ft. right-of-way of the standard Roman streets of 15 BCE, for example, was born from the dimensions of horse carts), the resulting patterns related extremely well to the human body.

The important adaptation of city pattern to human senses and dimensions of the body – championed by strong research of people like Jan Gehl – is often first sacrificed by contemporary forms of development. Between tight time lines, the increased speed of transportation methods and the massive scale of developments, new urban areas are often far removed from human scale and comfort.

Similarly, given that the lot and block dimensions inherent to past urban pattern are closely tied to higher densities – a quality closely tied to supporting transit and commercial activities – their value as models for today's urbanism is clear. Vancouver, Canada, for example, is constantly touted as one of the most livable cities in the world and has developed an innovative urbanism that is intimately related to its original

standard 33'x120' lot structure. This is also evident in the "Compact City" initiative evident in Europe that promotes walking and cycling, low energy consumption, and reduced pollution living.

Resilience and Adaptability

The implications of the human-scaled lot sizes common to traditional city structure reach further than human comfort, for history shows that they perform better over the long term, as well. At a time when complex global forces are increasingly volatile and unpredictable, the creation of resilient and adaptable communities fostered by the small lots is becoming more and more important. Smaller scale patterns make communities more robust through tempering large-scale transformations to communities under pressure.

Anne Vernez Moudon's seminal work on the physical transformation of San Francisco is an important testament to how a community's ability to evolve and change relates to the hidden traditional framework that supports it. By ensuring that property remains in many hands, she writes, small lots bring important results: from ensuring variety in the built environment through the different decisions of many to slowing down the rate of change by making large-scale real estate transactions difficult.

Large lot patterns with fewer owners, on the other hand, are susceptible to the potentially unpredictable change in reaction to unforeseeable outside forces. This is explicitly evident in the transformation of vibrant traditional commercial areas that have been selectively transformed by large, multi-lot footprint retail stores. As the volatile nature of recent global influences force large-footprint retail space out-of-business, it often creates sizeable "activity voids" along an otherwise energetic street. In many cases, these oversized spaces lie vacant for long periods of time due to their size. The large scale of these spaces, in turn, prevents the opportunity for small, incubator, start-up businesses to contribute to and maintain the vitality of the area. In this way, the large lot developments typical of contemporary development practices can also have potentially disastrous long-term economic impacts.

Although few studies have been done on the properties and performance characteristics of different settlement patterns over time, those that have been conducted – such as

Arnis Siksna's influential studies on the study on block size and form – clearly reveal the advantages of small/medium blocks and lots common to traditional settlements in virtually every category.

Interestingly, Siksna's research goes further to expose how different large block and lot sizes tend towards similar subdivision patterns over time – demonstrating explicitly how the large development patterns in Adelaide, Australia and Toronto, Canada, for example, have been subdivided or broken down over time, effectively approximating sizes and dimensions similar to the older patterns of cities such as Savannah, Georgia and Portland, Oregon.

On Preservation

The study of traditional city patterning suggests that there are universal principles of scale, dimension, and environmental responsiveness underlying good settlement design. The violation of these principals, and the consequent failures in city building we see today, points to how significant the hidden pattern is for our collective future. ►

We must try to preserve and learn from what is left of the historic and hidden patterning of our cities while being mindful of the dangers of our heritage and preservation tendencies that result in petrified building fabrics, which are closed to change, and therefore must rely on other unpredictable factors, such as tourism, to keep them vibrant.

The preservation of the hidden settlement patterns of the past is not opposed to change. To the contrary, the fact that many of the patterns still exist today speaks to their merit and durability. Change is a necessary for built environments to survive. By virtue of their strong logic and (universal) principles, the abstract lines of historic settlement patterns accommodate transformation of all types – such as changes in technology and building practices – while remaining firmly rooted in the common human values that created them.

As the foundation of what makes the built environment succeed and/or fail, the significance of preserving our hidden settlement pattern lies beyond the architecture that it supports and perhaps even the past cultural values it embodies, to a way of thinking that we must re-learn – standing on the shoulders of all those who came before us – if we are to confront the future boldly and confidently. **SL**



Chris Wiebe

on Canadian National Heritage Policies

By Alyssa Schwann, ASLA

SITELINES: *What are the significant risks to Canada's urban heritage?*

Chris Wiebe: Intensification. While there are many upsides to urban density, the changes underway in the older neighbourhoods of Canadian cities are unfolding with frightening rapidity and with little regard for the historic environment. "Intensification" is now the magic word for municipal committees of adjustment that "green building" was five years ago. Crazy juxtapositions of scale result. We're getting façadism and tiny historic houses cowering at the feet of huge towers. In heritage circles, there are currently two visions on the table: to hold fast to traditional conservation tools like designation and financial incentives, or to set these aside and be more loose and collaborative with the development industry in the hopes of better results. Many are naturally distrustful of the latter given the power relationships that undergird property development. There is also the fear of letting go, or easing up lest the hard won edifice of heritage protection come tumbling down. Besides, in many cities, compromise only leads to precedent: "His project got up-zoned to eight-storays," a developer will argue, "why can't mine?" Then again, there are risks in playing the designation card too vigorously, or indiscriminately. There is already a backlash in New York and Chicago where business interests are urging that landmarks laws be repealed.

SL: *How can political support be generated and maintained for heritage conservation?*

CW: This is the big one. Every cause related group is asking itself this very question. Where does political will come from? There are essentially two inter-related strategies: to change the thinking of elected officials, or to change public attitudes. Political support takes a lot of time and energy to develop and once groomed, politicians have a troubling tendency to get voted out. Other strategists

will advise you to direct your energies at senior staff – the deputy ministers, the planning directors - because these are the real gate keepers to change, shaping notions of "the possible" for politicians.

But perhaps we need to step back. Heritage conservation began as a social movement, one with the aim of changing people's behaviour towards places of value. We can't do this without addressing societal attitudes like "newer is better". No definitive research report is going to convince anyone of anything unless they are already receptive. I sense a shift. Perhaps I go to the wrong parties but I sense a growing disgust with disposable things and faddish ideas. There is a thirst for continuity and timelessness. The breaking point will come if a viable no-growth economics takes roots.

SL: *How could a Canadian national policy in support of conservation and rehabilitation of urban heritage be established?*

CW: Through ministerial fiat! Just kidding... sort of. It does come down to people in the right places: a decade ago, federal heritage

building rehabilitation tax incentives like those in the US were very close to becoming a reality but for a few well-placed decision-makers. In all likelihood the most effective national policy for heritage conservation won't use the word "heritage" at all, it will demand the wise stewardship of existing resources, fostering less demolition and more creative reuse. Provinces will fall in step with legislation that makes demolition permits harder to get; owners will need to offer very compelling reasons for why a building should be replaced. We need to create a slow building movement. We need more caretakers and fewer geniuses.

SL: *What is for you some of the most inspiring developments or projects of recent years?*

CW: Personally I find NIMBYism very exciting. Why should change be accepted as a matter of course? The "misuse" of heritage designation processes in recent years to thwart new development serves to spotlight community desperation and planning system flaws, but also people's profound attachment to places. Another thing is the growing recognition that density can happen with lower-rise construction. People like architect Owen Rose at Montreal's Urban Ecology Centre are counter intuitively showing that low-rise, historic Montreal neighbourhoods like the Plateau or Milton Park are actually denser than Vancouver's vertical West End. **SL**

Chris Wiebe is the Manager at Heritage Policy & Government Relations at the Heritage Canada Foundation.





Scot Hein

Highlights Some of Vancouver's Recent Heritage Success Stories

By Alyssa Schwann, ASLA

SITELINES: *How can the urban pattern and tissues of historic city areas be preserved in the face of necessary upgrading and land use changes?*

Scott Hein: Our work at the City of Vancouver towards respectful urban transformation in historic/older areas typically starts with a mapping of the urban fabric, including special places, connective systems and embedded stories/memory towards greater insight into what we might call the area's "historic echo or signature". In looking forward, such insight and awareness (captured as mapping) can inform planning decisions about the importance/role of the older urban fabric and how it can be respectfully re-energized to enhance urban growth and civic experience. By appreciating the special contribution that older buildings, open spaces, and connective

systems offer, we can manage more thoughtfully and incrementally. We want new design character to be conceived as more contemporary intervention to ensure that buildings remain distinguished and predominant for their time while contributing to a larger, cogent sense of both former, and emerging place. The Wing Sang Building in Chinatown is an excellent example of this aspiration.

SL: *What are some of the major challenges for Vancouver regarding heritage and sustainable open spaces?*

SH: Vancouver remains an attractive place for investment given our setting, governance and a regulatory approach that is intended to capture and share in the creation of new value. Such ever increasing upward pressures on land value motivated by welcomed investment

obviously challenges economic viability thresholds occasionally making the integration/re-purposing of in situ heritage assets, or the dedication of new public open space, questionable. By declaring future growth in Community Plans, while also highlighting distinctive heritage and open space candidates for new value creation, we can demonstrate this principle of sharing through thoughtful and proactive assignment and implementation. The location of valued heritage assets, when associated with new open space opportunities, can anchor new neighbourhood growth as with the Salt Building at the Olympic Village.

SL: *What is for you one of the most inspiring developments or projects of recent years?*

SH: There are so many recent Vancouver achievements. I have had the great privilege to work with such a talented design community representing all of the contributing disciplines. I will offer two projects. The first is Mole Hill. I continue to be inspired by this project as it represents the power of community advocacy at a moment when we could have easily lost the last completely intact block of Victorian/Edwardian houses dating back to 1888. Through the efforts of the local ▶



Salt Building at the Olympic Village, Vancouver. Image courtesy of City of Vancouver.



community, and the Mole Hill Community Housing Society founded in 1999, 26 houses were retained and upgraded as “working heritage” under a provincial housing initiative which created 170 rental units with opportunities for families. This diverse project has a daycare, an active lane environment with a focus on urban agriculture and communal activity, while accommodating private ownership within the block. The Dr. Peter Centre, a world leading HIV/Aids facility providing innovative day health programmes, as well as a specialized nursing care residence, is also a vital part of the Mole Hill community. A second project I would like to highlight is the recently completed upgrade to the historic turntable at the Yaletown Roundhouse Community Centre. The recent introduction of a large scale, red, telescoping crane with fabric canopy has re-activated an important urban space that will see new cultural and celebratory programming. This wonderful design initiative, the winning entry of a competition sponsored by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, thoughtfully demonstrates how historic buildings, and their related urban spaces, can continue to evolve with integrity and authenticity. The contemporary

crane structure playfully defers to the important facade of original maintenance bays constructed in 1888 as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway. **SL**

Scot Hein is the Senior Urban Designer for the City of Vancouver and a Registered Architect in the State of Washington.





Yaletown Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver. Image courtesy of Milkovich Architects and PFS Studio.

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Mike Hill

on WestWyck, a Case Study of Successful Rehabilitation, Conservation, and Adaptive Re-Use of a Historic Urban Precinct

By Jan Haenraets, PhD, MA, BLArch,
Dipl. Env. Studies



WestWyck in Brunswick, Melbourne. Image courtesy of Mike Hill.

SITELINES: *What were the urban challenges that existed in Melbourne that sparked the WestWyck project?*

Mike Hill: The Brunswick West Primary School in inner urban Melbourne in Australia fell victim to sweeping urban demographic change in the late 20th Century. The population of our inner cities was gentrifying and the traditional large multi-generational households of the immigrant families was transforming into new household types for the area, DINKs (double-income, no kids), and sole occupants. The population of Brunswick, traditionally working class and often first staging post for new settler families had been over 70,000 in 1970 but had collapsed to under 40,000 at the turn of the 21st Century. The household size was shrinking but the actual house size was growing with vegetable, ornamental, and recreational gardens making way for extensions which sprouted outwards and upwards.

SL: *How did WestWyck become an example for rehabilitation and adaptive-reuse?*

MH: As the population declined, infrastructure and service loss followed and health services, transport lines and educational facilities closed. Out of the decommissioning of the Brunswick West Primary School, WestWyck was born as a model that attempted to parody the socially destructive development model that Melbourne and other Western cities were following, and show respect for the successful design models on which our original Melbourne was based, a “back-to-the-future” reverence, and create an urban development showcase of sustainable living.

Importantly, the 125-year old heritage-listed building remained connected to its traditional neighbourhood as its classrooms and playgrounds are converted into 30 separate but inter-connected domestic residences. The building no longer directly serves the educational

needs, but, it continues to educate. It shows how retired infrastructure can be re-born for another purpose suited to neighbourhood needs. Its beauty and grandeur grace the suburban streetscape. Its Open Days and worldwide recognition boost the value of low footprint living and a neighbour recounts to us how she swells with pride as she tells others that she lives opposite the most beautiful development in Australia. WestWyck wins awards and hosts industry and professional and environmental events, thereby educating in a most practical way.

SL: *What are some of the core principles and values in the WestWyck philosophy?*

MH: WestWyck the “ecovillage” promotes the value of village and argues that village within a city is an important development principle. The WestWyck “village” is socially connected, designed for interactivity, environmentally light footprinted, and focussed upon the quality of design within the built fabric but perhaps more importantly, the quality of design of shared and open space. Every millimetre shaved from the private domain is a millimetre saved for dedication to a wider community. Communal gardens and recreation spaces and pathways and bike sheds become meeting places.

A feature of a real village is the way we connect with people in every daily step we take: to collect our mail; to leave the site in the morning and to arrive in the evening; to take out the car or bike; to see people walking through the complex on a regular basis. This provides a sense of security and comfort, a passive sense of vigilance. We know the name of all others in a village and we formally acknowledge newcomers and we welcome and offer to help strangers.

The shared infrastructure furthers sustainable lifestyle. It captures roofwater and treats black and greywater to a re-use standard and it provides fresh garden produce of the sort of quality that can only be achieved through dedicated communal input. In short, it is a model influential in setting new standards for quality sustainable design and sustainable living in Australia. **SL**

Mike Hill is a Co-Director of the WestWyck Ecovillage, Chair of the Natural Resources Conservation League, Deputy Chair of Sustainable Victoria, and Chair of Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria CAC.



WestWyck Ecovillage in Brunswick, Melbourne. Image courtesy of Mike Hill.



Neal LaMontagne

Advocates for Planning Models Which Fit New Development Within the Historical Fabric of Vancouver

By Alyssa Schwann, ASLA

SITELINES: *How can the urban pattern and tissues of historic city areas be preserved in the face of necessary upgrading and land use changes?*

Neal LaMontagne: Protecting exemplary landmarks is challenging but maintaining the intricate historic fabric within a growing city is even more difficult, particularly outside of the oldest neighbourhoods. I believe that cities should be living and evolving entities and that while we must maintain what Nan Ellin calls the “historic porosity” of the city, we can fit new development and technology into the established pattern and tissues of the city. This requires an approach to city-building that emphasizes evolutionary, not revolutionary, change and a careful and intentional approach to design and development decisions that respects the “DNA” of a place (what Vancouver urban designer Scot Hein refers to as the “distinctive neighbourhood attributes”). Some aspects are easier: maintaining the street and block pattern and protecting the oldest buildings are established practice. Beyond this, we need to build a planning culture that resists land assembly, master planned redevelopment, and the instinct to capture the efficiencies of scale, and in its place, focus on maintaining established parcel patterns and fitting new development within the fabric of the city. Cities tend to limit bulk by limiting height (vertical scale), but much more important is care and attention to the rhythm of urban landscapes (partly a function of horizontal scale), how buildings relate to each other, and the spaces that exist in between. Vancouver, I believe, has done this as well as any city in North America, but as more development occurs outside of the downtown peninsula, care and attention to how our neighbourhoods can evolve physically (to match the dynamism of their social constructions) is the next big challenge.

SL: *What happened in recent years in Vancouver, heritage progress-wise?*

NL: Although controversial, the re-emergence of Vancouver’s heritage neighbourhoods in and around the Downtown Eastside (DTES) as multi-generational “places-to-be” has brought new resources and new life to some very good buildings. The desire for character spaces (and affordable space for new business – a limited resource in a relatively young city) has enabled thoughtful and well-designed interventions and renovations (Acton Ostry Architects Inc.’s exemplary work for The Salient Group including the Garage and the Terminus, and Bruce Carscadden Architects’ work for Reliance Properties on the Burns Block). The end result has privileged preservation over redevelopment (in an area where development pressures have long loomed large) and added new layers to a few of Vancouver’s most beautiful and well-textured neighbourhoods.

But perhaps most importantly, the increased attention has also provoked some very important debates and discussions about the role of development in complex but sensitive places like the DTES. Gentrification and affordability remain serious concerns but I am encouraged that these issues are being intensely debated and discussed. Leveraging the value in the neighbourhoods, not only for reinvestment in heritage but also in social housing and support services, is key to the continued vibrancy of these neighbourhoods and the city. The future of the DTES remains uncertain, but the past few years has represented great progress.

SL: *What are the significant risks to Vancouver’s urban heritage?*

NL: Vancouver is a challenging city for conserving the heritage of the built environment, most notably because we are a young city and

a high-growth city with little space to expand. The result is intense development pressure on a limited land area that can not only lead to the demolition of older buildings (we have lost many and may lose more) but result in new development that, if not carefully designed, can overwhelm and degrade culturally significant streetscapes and other urban landscapes. It is important that we remain nimble and adaptive to these dynamics but we also need the appropriate resources and legal tools to protect our most vulnerable heritage assets (especially, in my opinion, our great mid-century modern buildings). As the Province of BC has downloaded critical responsibilities to cities, the competition for limited amenity dollars (themselves a threatened resource) between heritage and affordable housing, social services, and transportation investments is tightening (and the interest in redevelopment as a tool to provide amenities is growing).

As a young city, we also have a limited supply of the kind of old buildings that provide inspiring but affordable space to new generations of creative entrepreneurs and activities. This does put pressure on our physical urban heritage, but we have to be alert to what is actually happening here and not mistake interest in heritage neighbourhoods as a simple sign of market demand in them. Our urban heritage requires great care and constant effort to balance their preservation with the healthy evolution of our city. We have the collective creative power, but must remain engaged to support our heritage community (and our planners and designers) in their ongoing efforts to do so. **SL**

Neal LaMontagne is a City Planner, Urban Designer, and PhD Candidate at UCLA.

LIVEABLE CITIES'

Liaison with Heritage and Open Spaces

By Jan Haenraets, PhD, MA,
BLArch, Dipl. Env. Studies

Annual surveys and lists of world's most liveable cities each differ, but there are some clear trends from which some interesting lessons can be learned. For instance the European cities of Zurich, Vienna, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Bern, Stockholm, and Munich keep scoring well. Cities from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand do well. In contrast, Asian cities largely fail to make the top ten, with Japan still doing well and Singapore keeping a foot in the door. Major cities in the United States in general struggle to rank high, and Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern cities continue to get poorer rankings.

For instance the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which publishes the "Global Liveability Report", has placed Melbourne in recent years number one, while Vancouver and Toronto are not far off. The "Most Livable Cities Index" by lifestyle magazine, Monocle, has a top 25 ranking locations for quality of life and is seen as less anglocentric. Zurich and Helsinki topped the Index the past two years, with Vancouver ranking nineteenth in 2012. Monocle uses criteria such as quality of architecture, urban design, environmental issues, and access to nature. These aspects of cities make a major contribution towards the quality of cities and the liveability. Monocle's top-five and the tenth spot were all European cities in 2012 (Zurich, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Vienna, Munich, and Stockholm). Each of these cities is known for spirit of place, authenticity and character, qualitative open spaces, and historic landscapes. Tokyo is the only Asian city in the top-ten but also boasts a rich architectural heritage and many parks and green zones. The other cities in the top-ten are Sydney, Melbourne, and Auckland which all three have managed to balance rapid growth and development with the retention of qualitative open spaces and historic identity and character.

Eight of the top-ten cities in Monocle's and EIU's rankings are waterfront cities. Large water surfaces not only are a guarantee for open space, largely untouchable from the building drive on land where theoretically any open space is at risk to become a potential



Sydney, a blending together of the new and old in the green waterfront landscape setting. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.

building plot. Large water bodies also benefit recreation, air quality, and provide a healthy connection to nature and the outdoors.

Various aspects play a significant role in creating liveable cities, including managing urban continuity and change in such a manner that tangible and intangible values of the place are safeguarded. In many cities we can observe rapid expansions that ignore the significance of those tangible (structures, patterns, topography, etc.) and intangible (traditions, festivals, food, etc.) heritage and landscape. Cities that have lower rankings

mostly failed to balance development with safeguarding such values.

For instance, in Asia, 20th Century development resulted in many cities with high-density building, often more than twice as dense as average European cities. This results in a higher density of automobiles and greater pressures on open space. In the rush for modernization and aggrandizement the key values were often ignored and much of the heritage and historic character gets lost. Instead, fashionable design and architectural trends are employed to create so-called ▶



Modern Melbourne viewed from Princess Bridge across the Yarra River. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.



The restored historic Cheonggyecheon River in the centre of Seoul, which was covered up in the 1970s with a four lane suspended concrete motorway. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.

landmarks, artificial attractions, and economic welfare. The result is mostly the loss of heritage and open space, unsustainable environmental conditions, and a concrete sameness.

Working in South Korea I noticed that there appears to be little birdlife in the cities. An explanation given was that cement and birdlife do not go together, as they die or leave. Can we say that this also applies to humans? We are nature after all and desire natural environments and energy for quality of living. Our homes, clothing, utilities, food, and cities tend

to become more and more unnatural and scientific, especially when living in dense urban areas. A reconnection with the spirit of place, the natural and historic landscape can assist in re-establishing essential natural energy and in turning grey cities into more liveable places. In most cities aspects of the historic fabric and the layers of the past are still present. The “world’s most liveable cities” surveys show how heritage, nature, and qualitative open spaces are key factors in making cities healthy environments for living. **SL**

Jan Haenraets, Ph.D M.A. B.L.Arch, Dipl. Env. Studies, is an Associate at Atelier Anonymous in Vancouver, BC and an Assistant Professor at Pai Chai University in South Korea.

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The new Sky Tree tower in Tokyo from Sensoji Temple in Asakusa. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.



The sculptural installation “Edge of the Trees” by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley (2005) in the forecourt of the Museum of Sydney evokes the cultural and physical history of the site, while reaching up to the city’s more recent architecture. Image courtesy of Jan Haenraets.



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