

OCTOBER 2009

# SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



## TRANSPORTATION

Canada Line Opening | Road Rights of Way Receives ASLA Award  
| Vancouver Green Streets | Multi-modal Pathway Design

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Sitelines is published six times per year; February, April, June, August, October, and December by the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects and is mailed to all BCSLA members, registered landscape architects, associates and affiliates. The editorial deadline is the 8th and advertising is the 16th day of the intervening months. Advertising rate information is available on request. Inquiries regarding editorial, advertising, or other issues should be addressed to the Sitelines Editor, c/o the BCSLA at the above address.

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

# Editor's Note

By Brett Hitchins

**Since August 17th, traveling from downtown Vancouver to YVR International Airport has been much easier.** The \$1.9 billion Canada Line SkyTrain project is up and running and critics are clamoring to offer their opinions on the successes and shortcomings of the rapid transit. Canada Line is the poster child of recent transportation projects, but it is one of many projects in progress across the province that are focusing on two objectives: (1) Improving the efficiency and safety of our daily commutes and the transport of goods, and (2) bolstering local economies through improved access to business and industrial areas. The Golden Ears Bridge — as seen on this issue's cover — has certainly accomplished both.

Themed *Transportation*, this edition of *Sitelines* explores whether these objectives are being met and the integral role that landscape architects can have in creating successful transportation solutions. In his article *Canada Line Opening* (pg. 9), Lucas Nightingale offers a critical look at the new urban rail and the impacts that stretch down the line. Katy Amon, a recent UBC graduate, shares an excerpt from her 2009 ASLA award-winning thesis in *Road Rights of Way* (pg. 13), offering theory and an informed methodology for integrating avian habitats in Surrey road corridors. And Daniel Roehr and Greenskins Lab provide insight into their recently approved intensive urban agriculture pilot study in North Vancouver (pg. 6).

The breadth of ideas this issue encompasses is far reaching. From large-scale environmental restoration projects (see *NewSites: Ruskin Dam* pg. 8) to neighbourhood streets (see *Green Streets* pg. 5), transportation projects cut through diverse rural and urban, ecological and social landscapes. With limitless potential for innovation, landscape architects are poised to usher emerging transportation projects toward great design — the implications of sharing our expertise in this arena is not to be underestimated. We have a unique opportunity to contribute and effect change in complex political, ecological, and economic issues, and to become fully engaged in connecting people to places. ❧

## Next Issue

In January 2010 LEED® Professional Accreditation in Canada will evolve into a new form. In the December Issue, Jessica Woolliams and Karen Parusel of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council provide a critical account of how the impending changes will affect landscape architects across British Columbia. Also, a look at one of the highest scoring LEED® certified project in the world — Docksider Green, in Victoria, BC. ❧

## In this Issue:



Cover Image: The Golden Ears Bridge official unveiled, one of many transportation projects completed throughout the province this summer. Cover Credit: TransLink

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# ACROSS THE PROVINCE

A glance at the news and noteworthy items from across the province.

## LOWER MAINLAND

### Wasson 2010 CLARB President-Elect

Ian Wasson is the 2009-2010 President-Elect for the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards. Wasson is an urban design planner in the planning department in the City of Burnaby. Wasson served as the BCSLA Registrar and CLARB Representative for several years. He remains active with CLARB and we are confident that he will represent B.C. and Canada with his usual style.

### Landscape Designer of the Year

September 10th, amid a crowded group of Vancouver's most notable architects, designers, artists, Senga Lindsay was honoured with Western Living Magazine's 2009 Landscape Designer of the Year. Landscape architecture judges Ron Rule and Jim Hole cited Senga Landscape Architecture's sincere and consistent devotion to environmental concerns as a major reason for the award.

### The Cornelia Oberlander Lecture

"Pragmatics & Poetics: Beyond Sustainability" a lecture by Marc Treib will be held at UBC Robson Square in Vancouver on October 26 at 6:30 pm. Mr. Treib is Professor Emeritus of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley as well as a landscape and architectural historian, critic and author. Admission is free, but arrive early, as seating is limited.

## WHISTLER

### Whistler Bans Native Plants

In recent months, there has been an initiative to ban many of Whistler's native plants, in an admirable but misguided attempt to reduce bear-human conflicts. The BEAR SMART Group and The BEAR Working Group have proposed a ban shrubs, groundcovers, and grasses native to Whistler. In early October, a ban was placed on native shrubs to be installed at the 2010 Athletes' Village, which were approved over 18 months ago by development permit and based on previous RMOW plant lists. Our December Issue explores this controversial issue in a feature article by Crosland Doak.

## VICTORIA

### Johnson Street Bridge

Following weeks of extensive public consultation, Victoria City Council has selected the single-leaf rolling bascule bridge concept for the replacement of the 85 year old Johnson Street Bridge. "This bridge reflects the unique character of Victoria and will be a landmark for the next century," noted Mayor Fortin. Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture Inc., MMM Group, and Wilkson Eyre Architects are completing the preliminary design.

## KELOWNA

### The Houghton Road and Lakeshore Road

The Houghton Road and Lakeshore Road multi-modal corridors are in preliminary design. These two initiatives will see portions of two key streets redesigned as commuter/recreational routes to enhance the viability of sustainable transportation. There will also be an emphasis on creating distinct, aesthetically pleasing public spaces through the integration of public art. Site 360 Consulting Inc. of Kelowna is the prime consultant on both projects.

### Stuart Park

Stuart Park is under construction. The site is on Lake Okanagan directly across from City Hall. The Park will include Kelowna's first public outdoor skating rink during the winter months and will double as a ceremonial plaza the remainder of the year. Construction of this first phase is expected to be complete in June 2010. Conceptual design was by Site 360 Consulting Inc., Kelowna. Design development was by Stantec Consulting Ltd., Kelowna office. The contractor is PCL Construction.



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## CORRECTION

The photograph in the BC Products; Mubi article of our August Issue was a project in collaboration with Greenskins Lab, a fact that Sitelines learned after the issue had already gone to print, but something we would like to acknowledge.



# Vancouver Green Streets

By Jesse Veenstra

**Vancouver's Green Streets Program was presented at the 2009 ASLA Annual Meeting and Expo, in September, by Sandra James, Chani Joseph, and Nancy McLean.**

Image: Green Streets Volunteers Credit: Sandy James

**Creating distinct way-finding and public spaces throughout city streets, Vancouver's Green Streets Program is providing aesthetic appeal and a sense of community in neighbourhoods city-wide.**

Part of an initiative to support a sustainable city infrastructure, the Greens Streets Program was developed to provide a more pedestrian and cyclist friendly infrastructure, while at the same time testing best practices in storm water management.

Following a successful pilot in 1994, the program now involves 140 km of streets with traffic circles and corner bulges transformed into gardens featuring native plant species.

Encouraging community involvement and pride, the gardens are maintained on a volunteer basis by neighbourhood residents who can apply to adopt a plot. Assistance is provided by the city, which schedules compost drop-offs in each neighbourhood and offers

guidelines on plant selection, garden maintenance, and safe street gardening practices.

The City of Vancouver prioritizes the transportation needs of its residents, first emphasizing pedestrians, followed by cyclists, public transport vehicles, and finally, cars. Green Streets not only encourages pedestrian and bicycle transport, it may also reduce the impacts of climate change in the city by increasing plant diversity and providing habitat for small animals. [SL](#)



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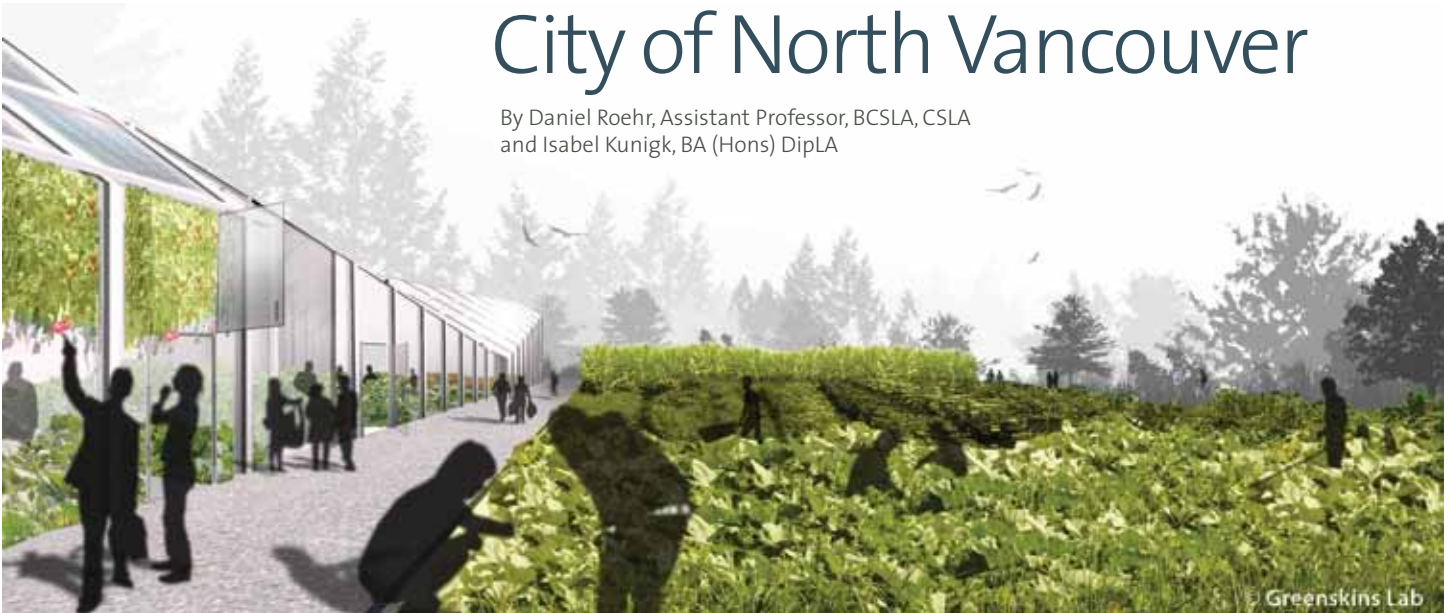
  
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# Urban Agriculture Pilot, City of North Vancouver

By Daniel Roehr, Assistant Professor, BCSLA, CSLA and Isabel Kunigk, BA (Hons) DiplA



## Local food production initiatives and awareness in the Vancouver area, though intensified by the beginning of the financial crisis in September 2008, did not arise only from the economic fallout.

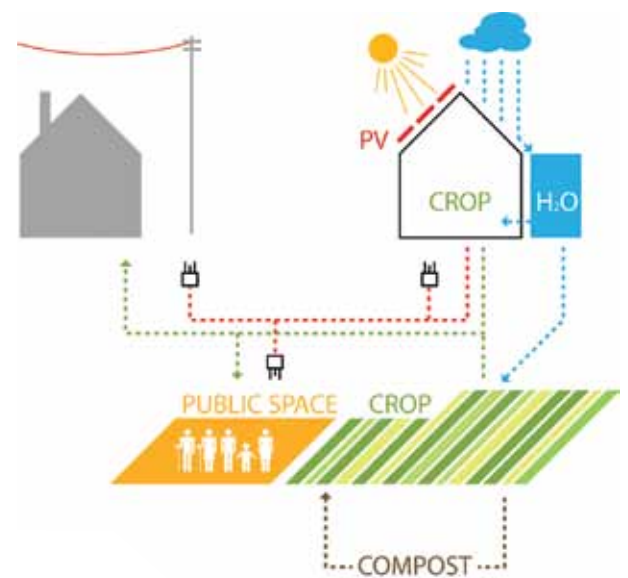
They have been part of Vancouver since the early 1970s. Since then, the greater Vancouver area has seen the creation of community gardens, demonstration gardens, organic farmer's markets and has, over the last thirty years, experienced a dramatic increase in the availability of more uncommon vegetable and fruit varieties due to the demands of a continuously growing international community with diverse eating habits.

During the past 10 to 15 years there has been a strong movement for a healthier lifestyle with a large variety of nutritious foods produced within local communities. A variety of projects currently explore the social benefits of urban agriculture. For example, integration programs for the homeless growing their own food or the development of skills in socially responsible urban farming for at risk youth. Recently, there has been a boom of not-for-profit and charitable organisations created to discuss and stimulate awareness in local food production and encourage such initiatives.

What has been missing so far is the implementation of a professional urban farm.

Such a facility would lend itself to experimenting with the latest growing and irrigation methods and the creation of a live model which could be monitored. In addition, valuable information could be gathered on the effects of a commercial farming enterprise that integrates social and aesthetic aspects of urban agriculture, such as nutrition education and food production training for residents.

A pilot project for urban agriculture in the City of North Vancouver is currently being developed and designed by Greenskins Lab, UBC in close collaboration with a group of enthusiastic volunteers from Vancouver and the North Shore. The project will be run by EcoUrbia Network, a not-for-profit organisation in the making that focuses on creating and facilitating sustainability-driven social initiatives. Aside from achieving the aesthetic and architectural integration of the farm into the urban surroundings and underused inner-city open spaces, a key objective is the exploration of two sustainable attributes: water harvesting and energy production. Water harvesting ensures the irrigation of the site during the dry summer months, when ▶



Top: The pilot program will focus on intense crop yields. Credit: Greenskins Lab

Bottom: Concept diagram illustrates resource relationship. Credit: Greenskins Lab

A key objective is the exploration of two sustainable attributes: water harvesting and energy production.

water is needed most for the crop to survive. The photovoltaic panels on the greenhouse roofs produce energy for heating the greenhouse for food production and running the water pumps for the irrigation systems. In addition, extra energy generated from the rooftops can be fed back into the grid.

On Monday, September 21st, 2009 the City of North Vancouver unanimously approved granting Greenskins Lab and team a five year license to occupy a portion of Loutet Park for the implementation of the pilot project. In a few weeks time, the public consultation process will start. The project has two main goals: On the one hand it aims to increase awareness for local food production and establish a framework for social enterprise and education to benefit the whole of the North Shore community. On the other hand, the farm serves as a laboratory for monitoring and measuring water harvest, irrigation patterns and energy production, and to advance knowledge in this field as well as assessing the viability of such a venture. The findings will be disseminated and made

accessible to other interested groups. Hopefully, this initiative will start a movement to create more such projects in different cities of North America to accumulate enough

data to convince policy makers that entrepreneurial urban agriculture needs to be an integral part of any modern urban society. [www.greenskinslab.sala.ubc.ca](http://www.greenskinslab.sala.ubc.ca)

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# Ruskin Dam Bioengineering

By Tenille Ziegenhagel, BCSLA Intern and  
Catherine Berris, BCSLA, MCIP, FCSLA

**Most of Catherine Berris and Associates' (CBA) past bioengineering projects have either been hidden away, buried deep within riparian protection areas, or seen only from a distance, in the case of the slope near Cleveland Dam in the District of North Vancouver.**

The firm's most recent project is neither; it is highly visible from an adjacent public road. The site is Ruskin Dam in Mission, a BC Hydro project undertaken to address seismic deficiencies of the dam's right abutment. The construction includes the realignment of Wilson Street to create space for future construction work, and required a large excavation above the road. The slope is the focal point of the view from the dam, which is a recreational corridor.

CBA was contracted to provide a restoration plan for the cut slope, which consists of a 1.75:1 slope of approximately 6,300m<sup>2</sup>. The site is near Hayward Lake — a source of drinking water for the District of Mission — and the Stave River, therefore control of erosion and minimizing surface runoff were critical.

The plan uses bioengineering (the use of live dormant cuttings for site engineering and



Environmental restoration efforts included the installation of over 300 wattles (for colour images visit [www.sitelines.org](http://www.sitelines.org)) Credit: Catherine Berris and Associates

landscape construction) to stabilize the slope and to provide homes for native trees and shrubs. The plan included over 300 wattle fences (small retaining structures made of woven live cuttings), with live pole drains in seepage areas. The trees and shrubs were selected to blend with the surroundings, tolerate the exposure, resist the temptations

of deer, promote biodiversity, and to serve as a pioneer ecosystem. Species included: *Alnus rubra* (Red Alder), *Acer macrophyllum* (Bigleaf Maple), *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas-fir), *Symphoricarpos albus* (Snowberry), *Amelanchier alnifolia* (Saskatoon), and *Rubus spectabilis* (Salmonberry).

Due to the summer timing of construction, a separate contract to harvest and store 40,000m of live cuttings, mostly Scouler's Willow (*Salix scouleriana*), was arranged for late winter. The specifications called for the cuttings to be harvested in drier locations to match the site conditions. A Denbow Terraseeded mixture was applied, with fibrous content, to reduce the potential for erosion and a temporary irrigation system was installed for establishment.

The wattles sprouted almost as soon as they were placed and most of the plants are establishing well. Two months after installation at 1m tall, the Alders are now over 2m high. One of the most interesting aspects of the project has been all the people passing by asking the contractors how they can do this on their own properties. 51

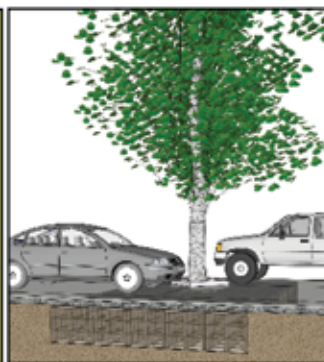
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# CANADA LINE

# Opening

Now that the initial giddiness of the Canada Line's official opening has worn off, how is the new system performing in terms of user experience?

By Lucas Nightingale, LEED-AP

**Vancouver's largest civic project since Expo '86 is up and running.** Completed three months ahead of schedule, the Canada Line connects downtown, Richmond, and YVR in 25 minutes flat. Eight weeks after the official opening, Vancouverites seem to have taken this record speed in stride and have settled into their new commuting routines. But does the Canada Line experience live up to peoples' expectations?

"It's good", says Annie Hsu, who takes the Line from Yaletown to the airport on a daily basis. The station in Yaletown is one of the project's most successful with regards to neighbourhood integration. Strongly character-driven, the site blends turn-of-the-century industrialization with contemporary glass and steel. This transition was made seamless by the blending of materials to cre-

ate a charming outdoor space. The angled roof of the station mirrors the distinctive canopy-line above Mainland Street shops, a subtle feature that makes this site feel part of the neighbourhood.

Public reaction is more critical around the King Edward station. "They could have done better," said an anonymous Cambie Village resident pushing a sporty, double-seated stroller. Fellow homeowner, Mark Podlasly, elaborated before purchasing his ticket: "[The station] is not at all reflective of Vancouver's character or local setting. It's just a box."

The pure geometry of King Edward station is a fine, minimalist statement. The resulting contrast, however, between the station's austere lines and the first, verdant glimpses of Queen Elizabeth Park across the street, is



The North Arm Bridge *Credit: Sitelines Editorial*

stark. A contemporary sculpture placed at the north end of the concrete and glass station may not be helping matters: the title of the new Sudarshan Shetty piece, *History of Loss*, might be too close to home for former Cambie Village merchants.

Kwantlen University student, Danielle Evans, has watched the construction of the guideway at Lansdowne over the past two years. Evans commented on how the towering Canada Line is now defining Richmond's landscape, though she admits that the scale of the project may be jarring at first sight. She looks forward to watching complementary neighbourhood centres develop along this corridor and sees them as opportunities for Richmond to grow. ▶

Beyond its practical function of providing transportation, it also provides generous fodder for debate.



The Canada Line final stop at YVR International Airport features a 18m high green wall. *Credit: Sharp & Diamond Landscape Architecture Inc.*

# DESIGN BUILD INSTALL



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Streetscape improvements along No. 3 Road in Richmond.  
*Credit: Canada Line*

Before its final stop at Vancouver International Airport the train skims over tops of mature evergreens and freshly seeded embankments. The views while on the train and within the station include expansive North Shore vistas, activity on airport runways, and the control tower framed by steel and glass. Returning from a business trip, Trevor Fenton described his take on YVR station as “Seamlessly integrated into the rest of the airport.” The statement the station makes is not in form, but in its transparency. The 18m high green wall is also a nice touch.

The completion of the Canada Line is an important milestone in Metro Vancouver’s history. Beyond its practical function of providing transportation, it also provides generous fodder for debate. Considering its densely populated service area and connection to the city’s international airport, Canada Line has definitely lived up to the promise of making Vancouver “one of the most livable cities in the world”. But as with all public projects, user experience depends on who you talk to. 51

# Riding, Rolling, and Pushing on British Columbia's Bike Lanes

By Michael Gordon, MCIP, Cyclist

**Michael Gordon, avid cyclist for over 50 years, shares thoughts on designing multi-modal paths that consider the needs of all users.**

**Cycling is fun.** As is rollerblading, skateboarding, and pushing along on a scooter. It is also a lot more fun and safe if facilities are designed well.

Victoria and Vancouver lead all Canadian centres in cycling. Since the 1990s Vancouver City Council has identified pedestrian, cycling, and transit in the city-wide and downtown transportation plans as the highest priority modes for new facilities. Cycling trips in the City of Vancouver have increased by 180 per cent over the past 10 years, with 3.7 per cent of trips to work now being taken by bicycle. In some neighbourhoods, just outside the downtown, the mode split share for bicycles exceeds 10 per cent. In the City of Victoria, 33 per cent of trips to work are either on foot or bicycle. ▶



A divided pathway along the Vancouver seawall  
Credit: Michael Gordon

TYPE OF BIKE FACILITY	WIDTH	ELEMENTS
On-street Bike Lane	1.5 – 2.0 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one way travel</li> <li>- painted lines adjacent to vehicular traffic</li> </ul>
Burrard Bridge Bike Lane	2 – 2.5 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one way travel</li> <li>- separated from moving traffic by a raised barrier</li> </ul>
One Way Bike Lane, separated from from vehicular traffic	3 – 4 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one way traffic</li> <li>- 4 m width is required if a row of trees separates the bike lane from vehicular traffic</li> </ul>
Two Way Bike Lane, separated from from vehicular traffic	5 – 6 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- two way traffic</li> <li>- 4 m width is required if a row of trees separates the bike lane from vehicular traffic</li> </ul>
Bicycle Friendly Street	4 – 5 m (distance between parked cars on each side of the street in older neighbourhoods)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- two way travel</li> <li>- mixed with slow moving cars</li> <li>- crosses long distances of the city</li> <li>- car speed is slowed by roundabouts, diverters and speed bumps</li> </ul>
Vancouver Waterfront Walkway	4.5 m (10.5 metres including pedestrian walks and landscaped separation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- two way travel</li> <li>- mixed with roller bladers and skateboarders</li> <li>- landscaped separation from pedestrians</li> <li>- bike route is paved with asphalt while the pedestrian route has cobble stones or bricks</li> </ul>

This past summer's controversy over the Burrard Bridge bike lane trial appeared to centre on the concern of motorists that road space was being taken away from the automobile. This trial was the result of a study on the three bridges crossing False Creek and the opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities on the bridges. Subsequently, Vancouver City Council considered several options for the Burrard Bridge bike and pedestrian facilities and chose to convert one of the six vehicular lanes into a bike lane, separated by a barrier from traffic. This fall there will be a report back to Council on the bike lane trial and a decision will be made on whether to make it permanent.

The major motivations for initiating the trial bike lane were: 1. Pedestrians and cyclists sharing sidewalks was creating a serious safety problem; and 2. City Council sought to improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Although they are often termed bicycle routes or bike lanes, a growing trend is seeing cyclists joined by a growing diversity of people on self propelled wheels. They include:

- Recreational cyclists who like to amble along or go at a fast pace to get their cardio;
- Commuter cyclists who generally like to go at a fast pace;
- Rollerbladers, whose pushes create a wider footprint compared to the linear movement of cyclists;
- Skateboarders, who can go in a linear fashion, but also can take up a wider width if they are performing tricks or four wheel slides or carving down a hill;
- People who enjoy push scooters; and
- Disabled persons who use wheel chairs or scooters.

...design bicycle facilities that are inclusive of these user groups...

As a designers, landscape architects should choose to design bicycle facilities that are inclusive of these user groups and do not present the need to erect signs forbidding their use by people who chose to roll around on something self propelled, but not a bicycle.


Past, current, and future projected facility requirements are providing some helpful guidance. As noted in the sidebar on page 11, there are a variety of bicycle facilities. Ideally, all cycling facilities should be inclusive and safe facilities for a number of user groups, separate pedestrians from cyclists, and provide sufficient width to accommodate the growing number of people choosing to ride, roll, or push. **sl**


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# Road Rights of Way: Receives ASLA Award

By Katy Amon, MLA

**Katy Amon wowed jurors in this year's installment of the ASLA Student Awards Program, earning an Honour Award in the Research Category and reaffirming UBC's reputation as one of North America's leading research institutions for landscape architecture. In this excerpt, Katy summarizes the key ideas of her winning project.**

**In developed areas it can be difficult to acquire land of adequate quality and quantity to create functional and connective ecological corridors.** Using birds as a biodiversity indicator, this project develops a transferable methodology for integrating viable ecosystems and habitats into marginalized urban spaces to augment quality and connectivity across scales. Road rights of way in the Hyland Creek Watershed in Surrey, BC are used as case studies to explore the integration of avian habitat, ecological function, and human programming as connective conduits. The project investigates the application of these layers through a variety of landscape types including suburban, urban, rural, and industrial.

Habitat models were created for nine indicator species, used as surrogates to indicate the presence of a set, or guild, of other species. Birds were selected because avian decline is often considered a surrogate measure for overall biodiversity. Of additional local significance, Surrey is located in a critical position on the Pacific Flyway migratory route. Optimal ecosystem conditions, including spatial attributes and recommended

plant lists, were modeled, paying explicit attention to the ecological processes that support the modeled species. These were used to inform the development of appropriate roadside habitat types that could function in linear configurations and could be exposed to right of way conditions. Species modeling provided informed landscape

types preferred for a variety of day-to-day avian activities, while also highlighting the symbiotic spatial relationship between humans and birds.

Design interventions focused on collector and arterial streets. They create the biggest fragmenting impact, but also offer the widest design

spaces for possible habitat integration and the most potentially connective. By slightly narrowing the traffic lanes to a standard of 3.35m roads become safer places and afford larger available habitat widths of 4 to 10m. As block sizes of collector and arterial streets are 800m in length in this community, 5,400 to 16,000m<sup>2</sup> of available habitat space can be afforded on each linear block, even accounting for sidewalks, driveways, and local streets — as a reference point, a Canadian football field's area is 8,000m<sup>2</sup>. This is a significant amount of available linear

habitat, especially when applied across a large landscape.

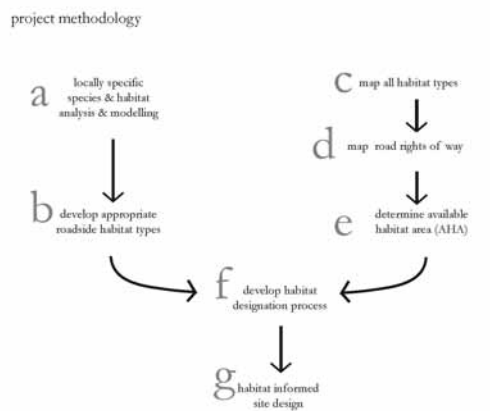
The knowledge attained in a literature review, modeling, site analysis, and site design exercises was used to develop a systematic habitat designation process. Selected site designs were used to test and simplify the resulting transferable habitat designation process.

This project makes two significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge: a methodology, and a design precedent. Dramstad, Olson & Forman (1996) have provided significant theoretical work in the area of landscape ecology, a discipline that focuses on the “structural pattern of a landscape or region.” This project offers an example of fine-grained transferable landscape architecture work within the context of landscape ecology principles, illustrating the use of locally specific species and ecosystem modeling.

This project provides site and community scale examples of street designs with both explicit human and habitat goals.

There is a growing body of work on altering typical gray roads to green streets. Even when habitat is included in goal statements there are either no specific habitat creation actions taken, or they are very general and are not site or region specific. Scientific research supports the premise that road rights of way as narrow as 1-5m are used as foraging ground, for nesting, breeding, and movement between larger habitat patches. This project provides site and community scale examples of street designs with both explicit human and habitat goals. The primary significance of this research is that it led to the development of a site-specific habitat designation methodology. If applied, this could significantly increase the quality and quantity of viable habitat area, which could considerably strengthen a community's role in maintaining biodiversity across scales.

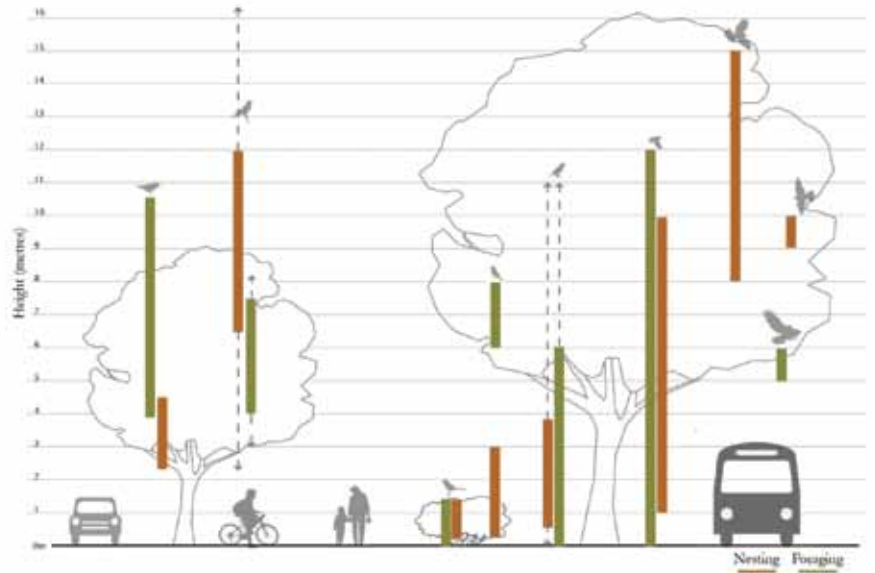
The proposed methodology offers a user ►



Although this project focused on road rights of way, the methodology was designed to be applicable to a variety of marginalized spaces. As shown here, the methodology begins in two parallel streams.

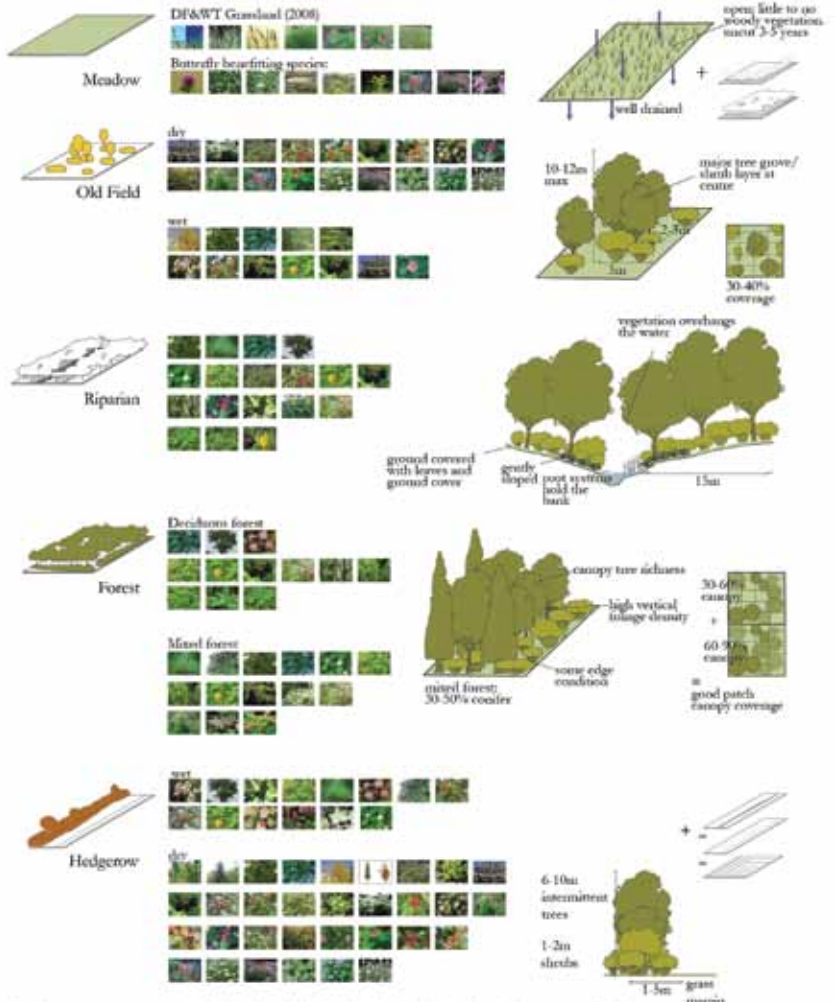
friendly tool to increase the habitat potential of marginalized spaces in the developed landscape and as a result, the potential for a much greener public realm. This methodology allows for landscape architects without specializations in ecology to make decisions that are more informed. It will increase the level of detail typically employed, going beyond generalized spatial patterns and guidelines to a community and site-specific habitat creation approach that results in site and context appropriate design outcomes. 51

### human and avian symbiosis



This spatial relationship demonstrates the heights at which the species forage and nest compared to our typical road right of way activities. Even in the case of low nesting or foraging species they will seldom travel more than two metres from dense vegetation. This allows for a symbiosis of use of this space between humans and avian habitats.

### a ecosystem optimal conditions



Local ecosystem types were analyzed and modeled, resulting in plant lists and spatial structures for five types.

# Bullet Proofing Your Proposals

By Donna Rodman, BCSLA Intern

**A proposal is a company's offer to supply a professional service to a client, within a certain time for a set fee.** The proposal can be a simple four to five page letter or a 500 page formal, bound booklet. It is a company's major marketing tool and helps your company survive, prosper, and grow.

Frequently a professional is engaged informally at the beginning of a project for its feasibility or cost. The ideal course of action is to set down a written agreement at the start. This not only protects you, it serves the client's interests as well. Many clients are not familiar with the practices of landscape architects nor do they understand the extent of our skills and responsibilities. Sometimes the client is not accustomed to the obligations of a contract. It is advisable to seek legal assistance in drafting the contract as the simplicity of even a letter may be deceiving. If the project is worth the time and effort of your services, it is worth obtaining professional legal advice. Finally, a written proposal defines your exposure to liability and enables you to match your liability insurance to exposure.

You could be the sole author of your proposal or you may have a multi-disciplined team approach to determine if the required weeks and expense will produce a feasible, cost-effective proposal. What ever level of complexity, you must outshine competitors' proposals and convince the reader that your firm has the best team, the best ideas for a stated problem, and the highest potential to get the proposed job done. Ask yourself the "so what" question and answer it with the advantages and benefits your firm offers.

## Research Your Intended Client and their Needs

The first questions to ask are: Is this work a referral and have you worked with the client successfully before? Do you want the job and do you want this client? Can you perform the work competently and meet the timelines with the resources your company has? There is no distinction as to whether you have a private owner or an incorporated company as a client, a Letter Agreement is proper for both and your diligence is the same for both. To avoid disappointment with respect to payment, it is prudent to include signed and acknowledged Personal Guarantees as separate attachments to your Letter Agreement, whether you are performing services to an individual or an incorporated company. If elusiveness becomes an issue when you attempt to collect payment for your services, you can invoke your Personal Guarantee against the owner of the company personally, and not just his/her company which may be dissolved or disappear inexplicably.

The second set of questions involves our

Code of Ethics and Bylaws. Has another design professional been engaged? Have they been paid out? Is the client using their design work and asking you to use that work? While our Code of Ethics touches this subject delicately, the Code of Ethics for Architects and Engineers address the issue head on. A review of our Code of Ethics and Bylaws will be helpful to you and they can be found in PDF formats on the BCSLA website. Design professionals are obligated to give credit where it is due and recognize the property interest of others. If a design is modified, the original designer should be notified. If a client comes shopping with designed work of another professional, the original professional should be contacted, asked if they have been paid out for their work, and asked for permission to use their work. Such a practice not only ensures that all the relevant facts are obtained and safety of the project is not jeopardized, but is also a matter of common courtesy.

The final test is to research your client. You can do this discreetly through a jurisdictional data base created by the Canadian Legal Information Institute in Ottawa. It is called CanLII.org and allows you to review publicly posted legislation and court cases. This tool is used carefully, the information obtained kept confidential and not used to 'injure maliciously or falsely, directly or indirectly' the client, their company or the professionals who may have been through court proceedings. The information allows you to determine the standing and integrity of your 'new' client. It helps to protect you and affords privacy to the client within a professional-public domain data base. ▶



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## Letter Agreements

A letter proposal, signed and acknowledged by both parties (witnesses are beneficial but not necessary), can be a Letter Agreement. It is commonly thought as such, but watch what you include and what you inadvertently leave out. The letter proposal is prepared in response to a client asking you specifically to perform services or it may be created in response to government proposals (procurement) where there is a rigid Invitation for Bids or a more flexible Request for Proposals.

## Components of a Letter Agreement

Introduction of the services offered

Understanding of the client's request and scope of work

Summary of Tasks

- 1.0 Background of your firm  
Corporate Description
- 2.0 The proposal and what it includes  
(addressing each item in the RFP)
- 3.0 Preliminary Concept Plan, Itemized Tasks and fee (including in the landscape budget estimate as a task to get the client's signed approval is recommended.)
- 4.0 Drawing Document Stage, Itemized Tasks and fees
- 5.0 Development Design Drawing Stage, Itemized Tasks and fees
- 6.0 Preparation of Landscape Budget Estimate and the fees for written approval by the client and for bonding (keep your Landscape Budget Estimates current throughout the project)
- 7.0 Building Permit Drawing Stage and references to schedules to be signed by the landscape architect. You may wish to ask for retainer ahead of preparing schedules.

8.0 Field Review Stage – list the field reviews you are proposing to do. Because this part of the work may follow 2 or 3 years later, you may want to ask for a retainer and list the fees.

9.0 Fee Structure and invoicing to include:

- Fees do not include disbursements at cost such as faxing, scanning, printing, courier, or transportation.
- If revisions are required beyond your control due to site design changes and/or additional city revision requirements if any, charges will be added at hourly rates and list your rates.
- What fees are not included regarding sub-consultants or special services.
- If you have a sign, indicate that you would like the right to post it at your discretion at the project site for a limited duration.
- Outline how you invoice and how you want to be paid. Make sure you cover the topic of unpaid accounts and the interest you charge per month if an account is overdue. Will you issue monthly statements after the 30 day period?
- Outline what taxes you are including against what service?
- Describe what action you will take before or after the 45 day period (timeframe in which a lien can be filed after the project is substantially completed, abandoned or ended) if an account remains unpaid. An example may be to deny service. Contingency statement that covers an allowance for revisions, extra communication and coordination, and a certain percentage of the total fees for specific proposal sections.

10.0 Management and quality control of your project.

11.0 Cost Summary.

Conclude your proposal with a simple paragraph of the estimated fees plus disbursements and when you want to schedule work. Ensure that you provide a signature line for your client with a date to show their acceptance and acknowledgement of the agreement.

## Experience Back to You

Consider the following important inclusions and actions during the proposal writing and completion stages:

- Take the clues out of the RFP and establish what is the priority, what are the requirements and respond to each requirement specifically.
- Remember: if it's a job at any price, the answer is we don't want a job at all. Be clear in your assessment of the true value of the work at hand and don't short change yourself and therefore others.
- Get the Letter Agreement signed and dated (even if it's a faxed copy to you). Make sure that the person who is signing the Letter Agreement is the Owner of the land and follow up later in the project when the first applications for development go into the City. If at all possible, ensure there are no changes in ownership and if there are, get a new agreement arranged.
- Attach a separate Personal Guarantee to the Letter Agreement, which is to be signed by your client personally. Some clients won't like this and if they decline to sign, you may wish to rethink having them as a client.
- When you receive a retainer or the first payment of your invoice, photocopy the cheque. This will prove that you have performed services and been paid. It is for your protection if you have to go to collections as bank account information will be needed.

## Conclusion

Focused writing in a proposal means keeping the text tight, accurate, specific, and avoiding jargon. The 'Cs' of technical writing apply: clear, correct, concise, and consistent. Once you select formats you like, project through your writing the professionalism, efficiency, and cost-awareness you know from experience. **sl**



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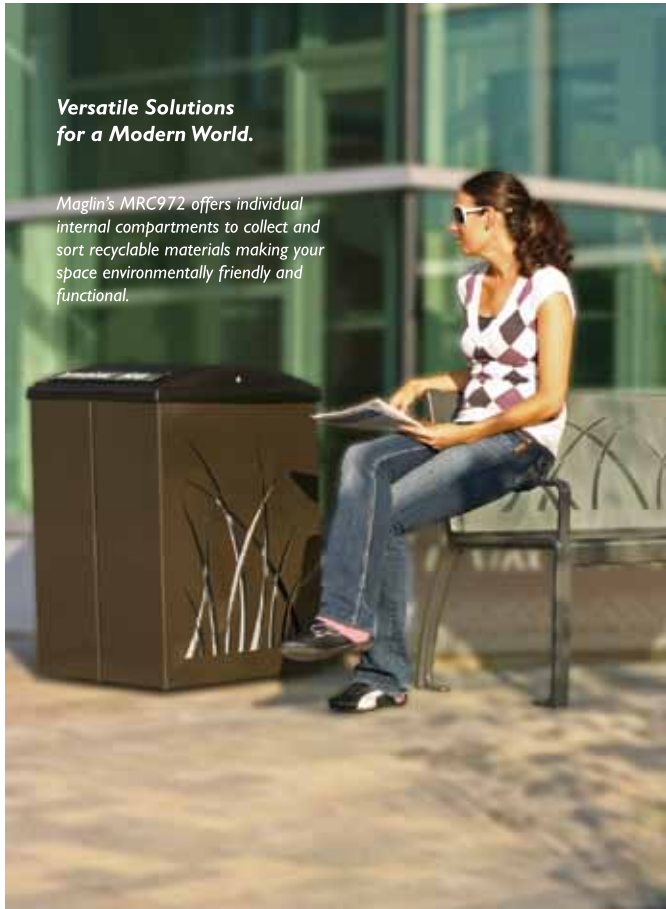
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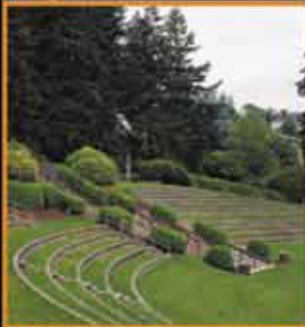
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