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SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



The Cultures of Design and Construction

Under Construction: The Relationship Between Designer and Builder | 7 Tips for Managing Risks on Design-Build Projects | ON SITE INSIGHT: Authentic Collaboration | Review: Imagining Uplands | CSLA Fellow: Virginia Burt

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COLLABORATIONS: The Cultures of Design and Construction

Illarion Gallant, BFA, MBCSLA, CSLA



The practice of Design/ Build is defined as a project delivery method in which the Owner contracts directly with one entity to provide both the design and construction of the project. It is important to recognize that a design-builder assumes responsibility and liability for both the design and construction services work. (AIA)

In thirty years as a Design/Build practitioner my focus has been oriented towards merging the culture of construction with the culture of design. This has been accomplished when conceptual three-dimensional ideas have been realized through a hands-on approach to creating meaningful spaces, places and relevant public art. The process of creating idealized beauty is tempered by realities of the site, properties of the materials and business constraints such as timelines, budgets and inherent risk.

Over the past decades both the Construction and Design industries have undergone significant cultural and technological shifts in the methodology used to develop, design and realize construction projects. Participating sectors within both industries have responded to dynamic forces shaped by the increased sophistication and rapid innovation of technology. This has required the workforce to achieve higher levels of education to participate in the contemporary world of construction either as designers or tradespeople. Culturally this higher level of education has created opportunities for upward social migration which did not exist a generation ago.

A realization over time, measured by a succession of projects, has shown me that experienced contractors and tradespeople can bring vast knowledge and insight to design discussions. During the design and pricing process ongoing comprehensive dialogue with relevant contractors becomes essential to access current building methodology based on accurate competitive detailing and pricing. Collaborative dialogue during project construction in the design office and onsite is essential. This communication works to reinforce the execution of the original course of action towards completion.

A collaborative working relationship between designers and tradespeople is a viable platform to successfully accomplish projects of all scales and scopes. This approach provides the opportunity for the Designer to have a high degree of input and control throughout the process of realizing a project. **SL**

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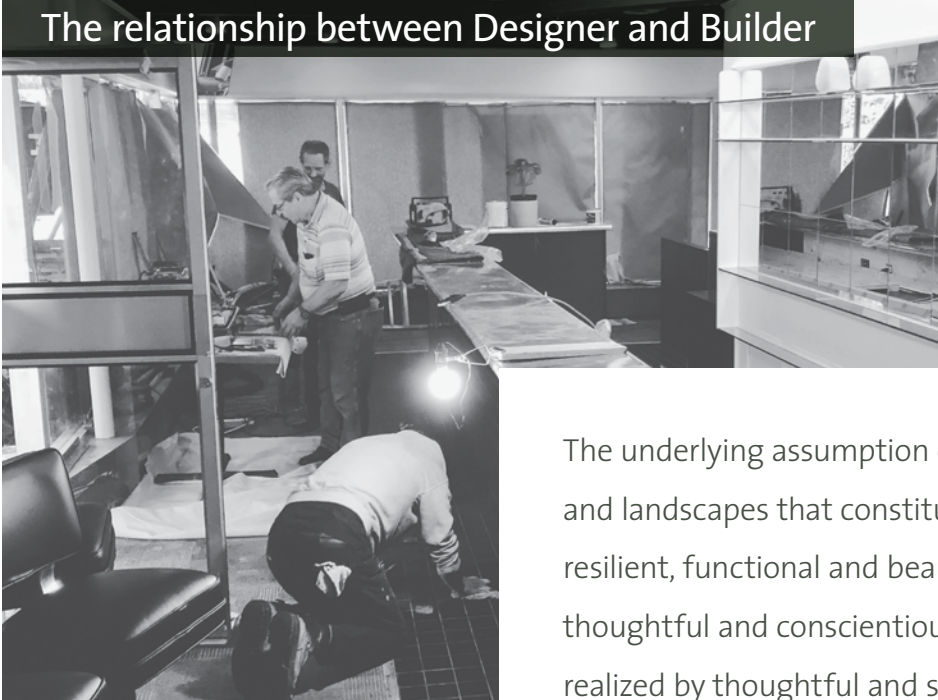


Image courtesy of Josh Leslie.

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Under Construction:

The relationship between Designer and Builder



By Architect Franc D'Ambrosio, AIBC FRAIC LEED
August 2019

The underlying assumption of this missive is that the buildings and landscapes that constitute our towns and cities are more resilient, functional and beautiful if they are the result of thoughtful and conscientious conception and design process, realized by thoughtful and skillful craft and construction.

There has always been a love-hate relationship between the architects of landscapes and buildings, and the people who craft them into being. Appreciation and even admiration of an elegantly resolved plan, a beautiful composition, a refined detail, an expressive use of quality materials, or even an unusual and challenging geometry, is in my experience appreciated and shared by all who participate in its conception and its construction.

But slightly below this idealized shiny surface is often a dark layer. The artistic arrogance of the detached designer, assuming no tradesperson is up to the task of realizing their brilliant conception, and the builder's scornful dismissal of a designer's conception as an unbuildable conceit drawn by someone ignorant of tools or technique. These resentments can be harboured in the minds of some builders and designers until directly or indirectly unleashed with the dreaded words; 'this can't be built!' or, 'this has not been built properly!'

Designer and builder, how did we grow apart? Perhaps it began when the renaissance's Architect-as-master-builder role fragmented into specializations spawned by the evolution of construction technology and material science. Perhaps it was the commodification of land or the complexities of construction economics. Whatever the cause or causes, the result has been that it is all too common, especially in large projects, that with few exceptions at the upper management level, the majority of construction trades-people will not have direct dealings with the designer of the project they are building. Similarly, the designer will most likely have no experience with the craft required and rarely meet the trades-people realizing their design. Reasons for this separation vary. It's complicated.

To add to this, the relationship between those who conceive what is to be constructed and those who commission and finance land and building development, is changing, and in many ways is becoming more important than

ever. The nature of building is undergoing a sea-change. From extreme specialization, to the invention of new materials, to ecological mandates, to robotics, to digital three-dimensional production, the tool-belt is increasingly specialized and multivalent. Similarly, design as well as the conceptual thinking and communication techniques that underpin and facilitate it, is less the province of singular genius and increasingly the product of multi-disciplinary collaboration.

In my view, the root of both the problem and the solution pertaining to the quality of the built environment lies in the relationship between builder and designer. The changes in the nature of both the design process and modes of production may afford the opportunity to close the gap between designer and builder. The involvement of the builder in the design process, and the involvement of the designer in the building process, will enable both to adapt to the changes in their respective realms, and potentially improve the industry in the process.



I believe that a prerequisite for this involvement is mutual, professional respect. This respect can be the source of a level of trust that is also founded on understanding of each-other's discipline and skill-set. Another prerequisite for this mutual understanding is a consensus about the importance and relevance of the work that both designers and builders are entrusted by society to accomplish. Establishing and maintaining this trust requires intention, effort and a kind of generosity.

In addition to respect and trust, another benefit that the understanding of each other's roles and skills will bring to the process, is self-reflection. This could lead to professional and procedural improvement. Peer and collegial scrutiny as well as critical review could raise the bar for everyone. It can lead to both designer and builder seeking higher quality in the industry, professional satisfaction and in the end, relevance and responsibility for the built environment.

It may be a worthy goal to somehow conflate Design and Build, and bring into harmony the roles of Designers and Builders. As the design and building industry evolves, so too will our roles as designers and builders. This may be a time where closer cooperation, based on mutual understanding and respect, can maintain the human element in an increasingly digitized and mechanized industry. [SL](#)

All images courtesy of DAU

7 TIPS *for* MANAGING RISKS *on* DESIGN-BUILD PROJECTS

Article provided by Professional Liability Agents Network (PLAN).

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Rob McLeod Courtesy of Professional Liability Agents Network

Design-build continues to grow as a project delivery method of choice for project owners looking for a streamlined approach to designing and building their next project. The concept is relatively simple: rather than having to deal with two primary points of contact (the contractor and the lead designer), as is typical with the traditional design-bid-build model of project delivery, the project owner chooses to have only a single point of contact. For the owner, this can greatly simplify the management of today's complex construction sites.

There are a handful of options as to who that primary point of contact, or "design-builder," will be, each of which has its own advantages and disadvantages. The obvious choices for the design-builder include:

1) Lead Designer as Design-Builder

With the designer-led design-build method, the lead architect or engineer on the project contracts with the owner to be the design-builder and then hires the contractor, sub-consultants and possibly subcontractors (if not hired by the contractor). From the lead designer's standpoint, the primary advantage of this approach is that he or she maintains direct contact with the project owner, which

helps ensure that the project design meets the owner's objectives. The design-builder directs the contractor and project subs to construct the project in general conformance with plans.

The major disadvantage of this approach is that the design-builder is liable for the actions of the contractor and all subs regarding construction means and methods, and jobsite safety. This is a liability that designers typically go to great lengths to avoid. Most contracts governing the traditional design-bid-build project delivery method include specific clauses stating the designer is not liable for construction means and methods nor jobsite safety. But with designer-led design-build, because the designer has a direct contractual relationship with the contractor and oversees its activities, liability for jobsite activities is inherent.

Liabilities for construction means and methods and jobsite safety present challenging insurance requirements for design firms. A designer's typical professional liability policy does not cover these types of activities. Nor is a designer's general liability or package policy equipped to provide coverage for construction activities. Designers will need

to work closely with their insurance advisors to purchase contractors general liability and professional liability, as well as other policies similar to those required of contractors, including bonds.

2) A Third Entity (e.g. Construction Manager)

A second approach to design-build is to have an entity other than the lead designer or contractor take on the role of design-builder. This third-entity design-builder may be a construction manager, a design firm hired solely to serve as the design-builder (but not the project lead designer), or a general contractor other than the contractor building the project.

An advantage to this third-entity approach for the lead designer is that there should be no added liability related to construction means and methods or jobsite safety. The third-party design-builder and the contractor will handle all decisions regarding construction means and methods on the jobsite. Still, the lead designer, in its contract with the design-builder, should reiterate that it is not liable for construction means and methods nor jobsite safety.

A major disadvantage of this approach is the lead designer's lack of direct interaction with the project owner. Working with a design-builder intermediary inevitably complicates communications and can lead to misunderstandings or gaps regarding client needs and design intent. You can design in accordance with the requirements specified by the design-builder, but the design-builder may not be accurately communicating the desires and expectations of the owner. And if the owner is unhappy with the design, you can bet that any liability for negligence, errors and omissions will flow through the design-builder directly to the lead designer.

3) A Joint Venture

In this design-build model, the lead designer and the contractor join to form a separate legal entity, often a joint venture. This new entity serves as the design-builder and primarily acts

as the owner representative and conduit to the lead designer and contractor, which continue to operate as separate firms in their design and construction roles. This joint venture is often project or client-specific.

The advantage of this structure is that the lead designer and the contractor continue to have communication with the owner through the conduit of the joint-venture design-builder. Also, the union of the designer and contractor in the design-builder role should lead to a more harmonious, less adversarial relationship than normally found between lead designer and contractor. Because they share the risks and rewards of being the design-builder, these two parties are more apt to pursue mutually beneficial solutions to any problems that arise. They might even enter into contractual agreements as to which entity (design-builder, lead designer or contractor) is responsible for which activities. They might also agree in writing to split responsibilities for liabilities along traditional lines.

For design firms, the primary disadvantage of this technique is that the joint venture they are party to will have liability for construction means and methods and jobsite safety. Even if the contractor has agreed to assume those responsibilities via a contract with the designer, that contract only applies to those parties. If the owner has a dispute regarding either design errors or faulty construction, you can bet it will take a shotgun approach and file claims against all three entities: the joint venture, the contractor and the lead designer.

Whether the newly formed joint venture entity, even with limited liability status, provides any legal protection for a design firm or its principals against a claim is questionable. Liability would depend upon the jurisdiction of any lawsuit and the specifics of the case. For instance, in some jurisdictions, the designer may face joint-and-several liability, or may be placed outside the purview of any anti-indemnity statutes intended for design firms. These are areas any design firm and its lawyer should thoroughly investigate before entering into a business relationship where a new entity is

formed to conduct business separate from the core company.

4. Contractor-Led Design-Build

We come to the fourth and most common form of design-build entity: contractor-led design-build. We have saved it for last because it's the type of design-build you're most likely to encounter and its one where there are some misconceptions as to how much added risk this project delivery method brings to the lead design firm compared to the traditional design-bid-build approach.

With contractor-led design-build, the contractor takes the role of design-builder, reporting directly to the project owner. The lead designer, in turn, reports to the contractor. Indeed, in many cases, the contractor hires the lead designer.

From the lead designer's standpoint, this arrangement has one major advantage: it has no responsibility nor liability for construction means and methods or jobsite safety. The contractor does not report to the lead designer; nor do the two parties enter into a joint venture or similar agreement where they share responsibility for design and construction.

Because of this important fact, contractor-led design-build has often been thought of as nearly equivalent to traditional design-bid-build from the lead designer's liability standpoint. Although the contractor picks up professional liabilities because it manages the lead designer directly and any subconsultants directly or indirectly, the lead designer does not have any responsibility for the contractor or its means and methods of construction. Indeed, the contract between the lead designer and the contractor should state in writing that this is the case.

It is a fallacy, though, that contractor-led design-build is, liability-wise, equivalent to traditional design-bid-build for the lead designer. Here are some important differences:

- The lead designer has no contractual relationship with the project owner. This prohibits the designer from securing protective contract clauses calling for ►

limitation of liability, mutual indemnities, mediation, waivers of subrogation, consequential damages and so forth. Chances are the contractor design-builder will not secure these protections on the lead designer's behalf. Even if the lead designer secures protective clauses in its contract with the design-builder, these clauses will not apply to the project owner.

- The lead designer rarely has direct communication with the client. The contractor will be the go-between and the designer has to rely on the contractor's communication skills to ensure the owners needs and expectations get accurately communicated. The lead also loses the ability to play the valuable role of trusted advisor to the owner.
- The contractor is responsible for the delivery of all professional services, including designs. Therefore, the lead designer will find itself having to justify design decisions to the contractor and perhaps modifying its designs to satisfy the contractor.
- The lead designer is now liable to the contractor for negligence or breach of contract. It likely also remains liable to the project owner. Many jurisdictions do not require that a contractual relationship exist between a designer and project owner in order for the owner to be able to successfully file a claim against the designer for negligence, errors or omissions in project services.
- The contractor design-builder may not have obtained all proper licenses, permits, insurance coverages, etc., to practice as a professional in the jurisdiction where the project resides. If the contractor is found to be practicing without the necessary prerequisites, the lead designer could become embroiled in charges of misconduct and aiding and abetting an unauthorized offering of professional services.
- Because of the contractual relationship, the designer may find itself brought into any bodily injury lawsuits from the contractor's employees, raising general liability concerns.

Tips for Contractor-Led Design-Build

Many architects and engineers will find themselves with an opportunity to provide professional services on a contractor-led design-build project. When that occurs, work closely with your lawyer and insurance agent or broker to ensure you take the necessary precautions to avoid the pitfalls you might face. Consider:

- i. Ask to see a copy of the contract between the owner and the contractor design-builder. Have your lawyer and insurance advisor look for possible deal breakers (warranties, guarantees, etc.) as well as references to dispute resolution, ownership of documents, limitations of liability, and so forth. Make sure any professional liability protections garnered by the design-builder are passed through to you via your contract.
- ii. Ask for proof that the contractor is authorized and properly licensed to provide design services in the project's jurisdiction.
- iii. Have your insurance broker conduct a thorough review of the adequacy of your policies, and seek certificates of insurance that demonstrate proper coverage for the design-builder.
- iv. Look for signs of adequate funding for the project, including a contingency fund. Owners often look to design-build as a method of fixing a low project cost.

- v. Work with your lawyer to create an equitable and detailed contract with the design-builder. Both ACEC and CCDC provide good starting points for design-build contract language. Then customize that language to fit your situation. Clear and thorough scopes of services specifying the designer's and the design-builder's exact project roles and responsibilities are vital.
- vi. Address ownership-of-document issues. If you are required to transfer ownership of your work to the design-builder or owner, set limits on what they can do with those documents. For example, limit their uses for operations and maintenance only and prohibit reuse of the design without your written consent (and adequate compensation).
- vii. Work to add a contract clause that requires the designer-builder to pay the designer for services rendered, despite any ongoing disputed services.

Can We Be of Assistance?

We may be able to help you by providing referrals to consultants, and by providing guidance relative to insurance issues, and even to certain preventives, from construction observation through the development and application of sound human resources management policies and procedures. Please call on us for assistance. We're a member of the Professional Liability Agents Network (PLAN). We're here to help. [SL](#)



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ON SITE INSIGHT: AUTHENTIC COLLABORATION



Using brute machine force to execute a creative vision has consequences. A landscape architect and his excavation contractor discuss the value of collaborating to manage site dynamics from the conceptual design stage to the completion of site work.

It was a lovely August afternoon in our garden. Landscape architect Illarion Gallant (a principal of Rusnak Gallant Ltd) and John Plant (owner of John Plant Excavating) had joined me to talk about their professional collaboration over the course of 25 years. Together, the two companies have built many beautiful spaces including our small haven.

Principals Twyla Rusnak and Illarion Gallant know the value of working in close collaboration with their major contractors from the design phase forward. Earthworks are a critical and expensive component of site work and John is engaged early in the planning process.

“John can read landscape the way an MRI reads a body,” said Illarion. “He either knows

or can intuit what lies beneath most sites on Southern Vancouver Island. He understands the dynamics of soil, slope and drainage. His acumen and his network of like-minded colleagues have helped us solve many complex challenges at both the design stage and in constructing projects.”

Two years after their first collaboration, their working relationship gelled during construction for a large-scale residential estate project. Architectural construction and utility installations were underway concurrently, creating an intense, active worksite.

The builder was focused on the elaborate architectural detailing. When this construction was far enough along, it was logical to begin site work and landscaping.

Moving bulk materials requires accuracy and efficiency. John values those qualities in others’ work as well. His excavator cab afforded him a 360-degree purview of the site, and what he saw was concerning: pockets of chaos, inefficiencies, and safety issues. Given John’s extensive experience it made sense for him to coordinate the site’s activities.

“For every major project since then,” said Illarion, “John has coordinated our site. Experienced excavation contractors are a good choice. They understand the site, they schedule and orchestrate all site equipment, and they keep constant vigil over the space around their excavators. It makes sense for them to have meaningful input.”

John concurred, but pointed out that being ►



a large, gruff-voiced man with a huge machine is no assurance that his oversight will be accepted by other contractors and workers. His authority stems from the degree of overt respect accorded him by builders and professionals, and from his respect for them. “When I see or anticipate problems, I point them out constructively. If there’s trust and ongoing communication between us, there’s no need for a long discussion. It’s a quick decision because my expertise is acknowledged.”

John’s emphasis on respect extends to everyone on site. “I may yell to get someone’s immediate attention if things are going sideways, but it’s not my style to diminish people. I prefer to mentor young, inexperienced workers and teach them how to work safely and efficiently on a busy site.”

I asked John what makes for a successful collaboration with building contractors, architects and landscape architects.

Site management is only part of the picture. John equally values having input at the design stage. His mission is to help build a structurally stable landscape that is as close to the original vision and budget as the site will allow. He knows that using brute machine force to execute a creative

vision has consequences. His understanding of site dynamics brings considerations of feasibility to the design process.

That said, digging soil and rearranging the contours of the land will unleash dynamics and uncover issues no one can fully anticipate at the design stage. They must be dealt with during the build. He prefers to work with designers and builders who come to the site daily.

John thinks it is also vital to meet clients and walk the site with them early in the build. His machines sit idle during the visit but he considers that cost an investment which pays dividends.

“Clients are well off. They want what they want, and they’re willing to pay for it — yet they always have an eye on the bottom line,” said John. “Running an excavation business, I know the importance of a bottom line. But professional landscaping is an art. If decisions are only about money, it’s not going to turn out as well.

“While walking a site with clients,” he continued, “I hear their goals and concerns. I show them that their site has its own characteristics and dynamics which can affect the outcome of the project. When issues arise later, as they always do, the clients are better prepared for it.

If their landscape architect tells them that something can’t or shouldn’t be done because of site characteristics, or that extra costs are involved because of unforeseeable issues, they’re more likely to accept it.”

More likely, yes. But not always.

Some years ago Twyla and Illarion worked with John to build an extensive garden for a newly renovated mansion. The design included a large, naturalistic pond. Part of an open, 200-metre hydro trench ran through the planned pond excavation. The home was almost ready for occupancy but the services had not yet been connected.

The utility’s timetable diverged from the critical path of the landscaping project: excavating for the pond would create a conflict with the electrical services installation. The pond would have to wait.

By the time services had been installed, it was almost November, a month which is typically cold, dark and wet in coastal BC. John recommended delaying the pond excavation until mid-winter, when the heavy rains usually abate. Illarion agreed, and advised the client.

Most clients consider heat, light, and running water to be higher priorities than a finished

landscape. For this client, however, everything was a priority. He insisted on moving ahead with the pond. John knew there could be issues once the rains started but at that point, the weather was dry. The excavation began.

Heavy rains soon followed, bringing with them all the problems John had foreseen. “The soil became saturated, creating instability on the slopes of the excavation,” John explained. “We had a premature pond at the bottom of the excavation, and tonnes of wet, excavated clay had to be exported. Disposal fees for wet clay are high, as are the costs of trucking such heavy loads to the limited number of disposal sites.”

Delay and additional expense are issues no client likes to face. Tapping his network of colleagues, John found appropriate, affordable locations for the exported material. Then he developed an on-site filtration system to create clean run-off from the retained rainwater. “John’s initiative, technical expertise, and problem-solving skills saved a lot of time and money,” said Illarion. “I made sure the client was aware of that.”

In addition to site-specific logistical challenges, some project designs present an inherent risk of personal injury. A hallmark of Rusnak Gallant landscapes is the use of massive boulders. Illarion does not delegate rock-setting: he wants full control over the aesthetic outcome. Trust between him and his excavating contractor must run deep.

In our garden, for example, truckloads of three- to five-tonne boulders of local blast rock were used to create a rock face. We watched the choreographed rock-setting from a safe distance.

Chained and then suspended from the excavator hoist, each boulder had to be placed perfectly from an aesthetic perspective, yet securely nestled against others to ensure the permanent stability of the whole. This was accomplished in human silence, John’s hands on the controls and his eyes on everything and everyone else — especially Illarion, who signalled from below and rigged the chains to help position each boulder. More than once the huge excavator shuddered and rocked forward, straining under its burden of stone.



“John’s entire work day is characterized by an acute awareness of his immediate surroundings,” said Illarion, “and he’s perfectly in command of his machine. I have never been close to being injured while setting rocks.

“Beyond conventional hand signals, John and I can tell with just a glance from the other whether or not things are going well. It’s actually annoying to be interrupted while we’re in that zone.

“At some point years ago, we both realized that for most of our time together on a site we don’t need to say anything.”

While the silent communication developed over time, open and ongoing discussions have always underpinned the professional relationship. “Twyla, Illarion and I set aside ego right from the start,” said John. “We could be completely honest with one another. That’s how our collaboration began.”

Illarion elaborated. “We talk about everything pertaining to a project – design, execution, the clients’ objectives and concerns, and problem-solving on site. The conversation includes issues seen from John’s perspective. As a result we have a shared frame of reference for every project.”

In Illarion’s view, managing contracts is business, not collaboration; finding the right people for the job and letting them get on with it is delegation; and seeking advice on technical issues is consultation. “All are important in business relationships, of course,” said Illarion, “but authentic collaboration at the creative level is a notch above any of these.

“Twyla and I accept our major contractors as peers, invite them into the creative dialogue, and continue to engage with them at that level throughout the project. It’s one of the organizing principles of our firm. The achievement of our artistic vision for any site depends on it.”

By this point in the conversation, dusk had settled on our garden. Once, it been an uninteresting and challenging space. Now, in any light and in every season, it has beautiful bones. I thought to myself, “This is what collaboration looks like.” **sl**

Patricia Weldon (M.A., B. Ed.) has worked in education, public policy, strategic planning, and communications. Now retired, she gardens (and occasionally writes) in Victoria BC

IMAGINING UPLANDS

by Larry McCann, PhD 2016

In his book *Imagining Uplands, John Olmsted's Masterpiece of Residential Design*, University of Victoria Professor Emeritus Larry McCann presents a thorough and compelling account of the planning and development of the Uplands, near Victoria, B.C., considered one of Canada's most noteworthy residential estates, and a masterpiece of designing in harmony with the land. It is not widely known that the Uplands was designed by John Olmsted, step-son of Frederick Law Olmsted, who is generally regarded as the father of the profession of landscape architecture. *Imagining Uplands* provides valuable insights into the culture of Edwardian Victoria, as well as the life of one of North America's early landscape architects.

The Landscape

In 1906, when the District of Oak Bay was incorporated, the area that was to become the Uplands residential area was part of a farm owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. It comprised 465 acres of gently sloping land, featuring Garry Oak woodlands and meadows, bordered by an ocean shoreline with scenic views. It was a picturesque landscape, reminiscent of the oak parklands of England. Despite some grazing, the land still remained largely in a natural state.

The Players

As the author relates, it was William Gardner, a real estate developer from Winnipeg, who first saw the potential of the Uplands for an upscale residential area. He was familiar with

successful planned residential developments elsewhere in North America, and sought out a designer who could realize the potential of the Uplands site. Gardner had heard of the Olmsted Brothers firm and knew of their reputation planning park systems, university campuses and residential estates.

Through correspondence uncovered, McCann shows John Olmsted to be a prolific professional, working tirelessly on projects across North America, passionate, and thoroughly devoted to creating landscape plans which met the needs of his clients and the public, while respecting the unique character of the land.

After much persistence and persuasion, William Gardner enticed John Olmsted, who was working in Seattle at the time, to come for

a short visit to see the property. Olmsted was immediately impressed by its beauty. As the author demonstrates, it was this combination of an enlightened owner who saw the potential of the site, and a competent and creative landscape architect who could work with the land in a sensitive way, that resulted in the Uplands plan we see today.

The Plan

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Uplands is the abundance of mature Garry oak trees, which have survived for over a century. Prior to development, John Olmsted ordered a survey of all large trees on the property, as well as a detailed topographic map. In one of many illustrations in the book, Larry McCann has selected a plan showing a portion of the road system and lot layout superimposed on the topographic map and tree survey. This drawing illustrates the care taken by Olmsted to locate roads so as to minimize site grading and optimize tree retention.

Roads through the Uplands plan followed a curvilinear pattern, parallel to the contours, with islands of parkland where roads merged.

Lots in the Uplands were relatively large, averaging 1/2 acre, and varied in shape, allowing houses to be set well back from the road, and affording privacy between neighbouring



Plan 3276-21 for Uplands Subdivision provided courtesy of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, MA

dwellings. With a large portion of the site not built on, larger lots also afforded more root zone protection around oaks, and thus a high degree of tree protection as compared to other residential areas in the region. The Uplands plan stood in contrast to the conventional grid road network and small rectangular lots found in most cities at the time.

As the author shows, views, whether from the road, the home site or seashore, were important to Olmsted, and lots were laid out to with an eye to maintaining and enhancing views.

As McCann quotes, John Olmsted designed the subdivision “to make the most of the natural beauties of the property”, and described the Uplands as a “residential park”. It is perhaps no coincidence that Olmsted was a park planner as well as a residential estate planner. One of the interesting aspects of the Uplands development process revealed in the book was the question as to whether the internal parks and roads should be public or private. Based on American experience, roads and infrastructure within the Uplands were built by the developer. Olmsted and the land developers preferred private ownership as a way to ensure that the desired intent and quality of common areas were maintained. Ultimately, roads and park areas came under municipal ownership and authority.

As part of the settlement of outstanding taxes owing to Oak Bay by the developers, 76 acres of the Uplands property, including the Cattle Point ocean frontage, were sold to the municipality in 1946. This land, now known as Uplands Park, is one of the few remaining examples of an intact Garry oak ecosystem in the region.

The Legacy

The Uplands stands as an example of how wise land planning can simultaneously serve environmental, aesthetic and economic interests. From the beginning, the Uplands has attracted high quality residential development within a picturesque natural setting. Residents continue to value what the Uplands

offers in terms of large lots, privacy and scenic views, and particularly the Garry oak trees which provide much of the area’s ambiance.

In *Imagining Uplands*, Dr. McCann makes an important contribution to the history of landscape architecture in British Columbia. It is a well-researched and well-illustrated book, and offers an insight into a time and a place early in our history where natural landscapes were appreciated, and where a few developers were willing to risk taking a bold approach to residential planning and design. The fact that the Uplands has maintained its integrity and appeal for over a century speaks well of John Olmsted’s commitment to identifying and expressing the genius loci of this special landscape. **SL**

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PROFILE OF

Virginia Burt

, FCSLA, FASLA, MBCSLA, OALA



It was Canadian Thanksgiving of 1976 that I first learned the term landscape architecture. My brother brought home a friend in the program at University of Guelph. I was astounded that such a profession existed, and my passion for drawing and sciences could be applied. I immediately fell in love — and applied as soon as I could.

Design Workshop hired me directly from U of G in 1985 — indeed a dream job where I learned the business of preparing working drawings, coordination and truly understanding how things get made — from detail to ski area master planning. After two years, I returned to Toronto and began working with JSW+ Associates. There we worked side by side with engineers and planners again developing the understanding of how things are made — developing large complex projects both on the water and off.

Then a brief time at a planning firm — opening a landscape architecture division of that person's business. Not long after I realized a traditional approach was not a fit. Waiting on tables would be better than continue in the way being promoted. Eleven years of landscape architecture

and after many years pursuing various spiritual practices, my heart wanted something more. I packed my files in the car.

That evening I was volunteering to help facilitate an inspirational process for executives and high school students called *World Council*. The *World Council* tagline: "Access greatness within to act with greatness outside of yourself". Midway through the evening, a woman approached me to express her appreciation and asked what I did in my "real" work life.... Remember I had my files in the car... an answer came flying out of my mouth: "I am a landscape architect and I design spirit and healing gardens."

"Wow!" she exclaimed "tell me more. "to which I paused and replied, "Ah, May I get back to you?". Indeed, an epiphany.

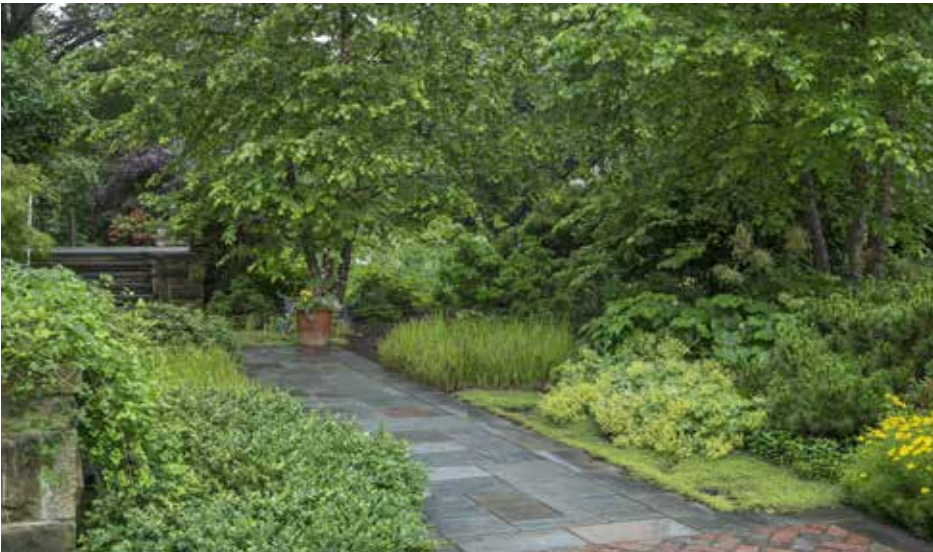
Still astonished, I relayed this same story at a dinner party the following evening. A gentleman across the table said "I'd like a garden like that ". The next morning on June 13, 1996, my fledgling firm began. At the time, very few had heard of a healing garden, so I began a journey of exploration, research and read and write and design — what is a healing garden? Is it possible? Who

is writing about the importance of gardens? is there any research? To me a garden made specifically with an intent to connect people with nature is, and continues to be, more than universal/accessible design or planting echinacea, there are mental, emotional and spiritual benefits to these places. My firm has evolved over time, I am dedicated to creating meaningful spaces with a profound respect for stakeholders, clients and those we serve. This includes both public and private clients, seeking to connect with those who are a fit.

Inspirations: Edward O. Willson, author of *Biophilia* and his hypothesis that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature. His notion of environmental stewardship includes the satisfaction derived from direct interaction with nature and the physical appeal of nature, evident in its role as a source of inspiration and peace. The importance of our green spaces to human health and well-being is more relevant each day as our towns and cities increase in density. I grew up on an apple farm, so my connection to nature is deep and wide — and I am grateful for this innate knowledge of nature and how we interact with it.



All images courtesy of Virginia Burt



Ms. Oliver's work is simply magnificent. Give your work time and space and power.

Turning points in my firm's evolution.

The first: combining organizational development large group intervention techniques with landscape architecture to tap the innate wisdom of people and create a master plan that has heart and get implemented. This technique was employed by our firm during a master planning project called Common Ground — A spiritual retreat in nature for inner-city children and corporate groups to be in touch with nature. The project won a national ASLA award in Planning in 1999. During that trip, I had dinner with three influential thinkers: Clare Cooper Marcus (Environmental Psychologist and award winning Author), Marni Barnes (Landscape Architect and researcher) and Julie Messervy (author and garden designer). We deliberated on the importance of gardens with meaning and heart — I simply didn't want the evening to end.

Another turning point was Norman's Garden at The Gathering Place in 2006. This garden has had over 180,000 visits by ►

.....
We must keep every scrap of nature in and around our cities. Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction.

E.O. Wilson

Mary Oliver, poet laureate for the United States continues to inspire. Her latest book *Upstream*, speaks about the creative process: "The most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work, who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave to it neither power nor time."

people touched by cancer in the past 13 years. This project was elevating — in collaboration, in applying the craft of landscape architecture in an inspirational way. The garden affects so many people as demonstrated by ongoing phenomenological research by staff. It is an award-winning project that continues to engage and encourage people. It has been my honour to work with the staff — they are angels.

Overlaid is my ongoing deep friendship with Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, C.C. My first interaction with Cornelia's work was at Expo '67. As a young girl aged 6, I played on the dory and cried when we were directed inside. Our next interaction was in 1986, where during a cold call by yours truly, Cornelia agreed to take three young landscape architects on a tour of Robson Square. Cornelia inspires all of us to say yes. Today we talk and visit often.

To our younger landscape architects, I encourage you to continue to push yourself. Our clients deserve us to be the best we can be. Ongoing education is important for our mental advancement and professionalism. Meditation, compassion, integrity, empathy and passion all contribute to our spiritual health and well-being. In my opinion, the result of our work — be it public or private — affects people in profound ways. With climate change, urban development and ecosystems needing our attention, the world needs landscape architects — we the stewards of the land — more than ever.

As one of seven women in the world who are Fellows of both the ASLA and CSLA, it is my intention to continue to pursue meaningful work that elevates our profession. I am grateful for the opportunities to participate with so many wonderful people. It is my belief that small moves made continuously over time truly make a difference. We can do this. **SL**



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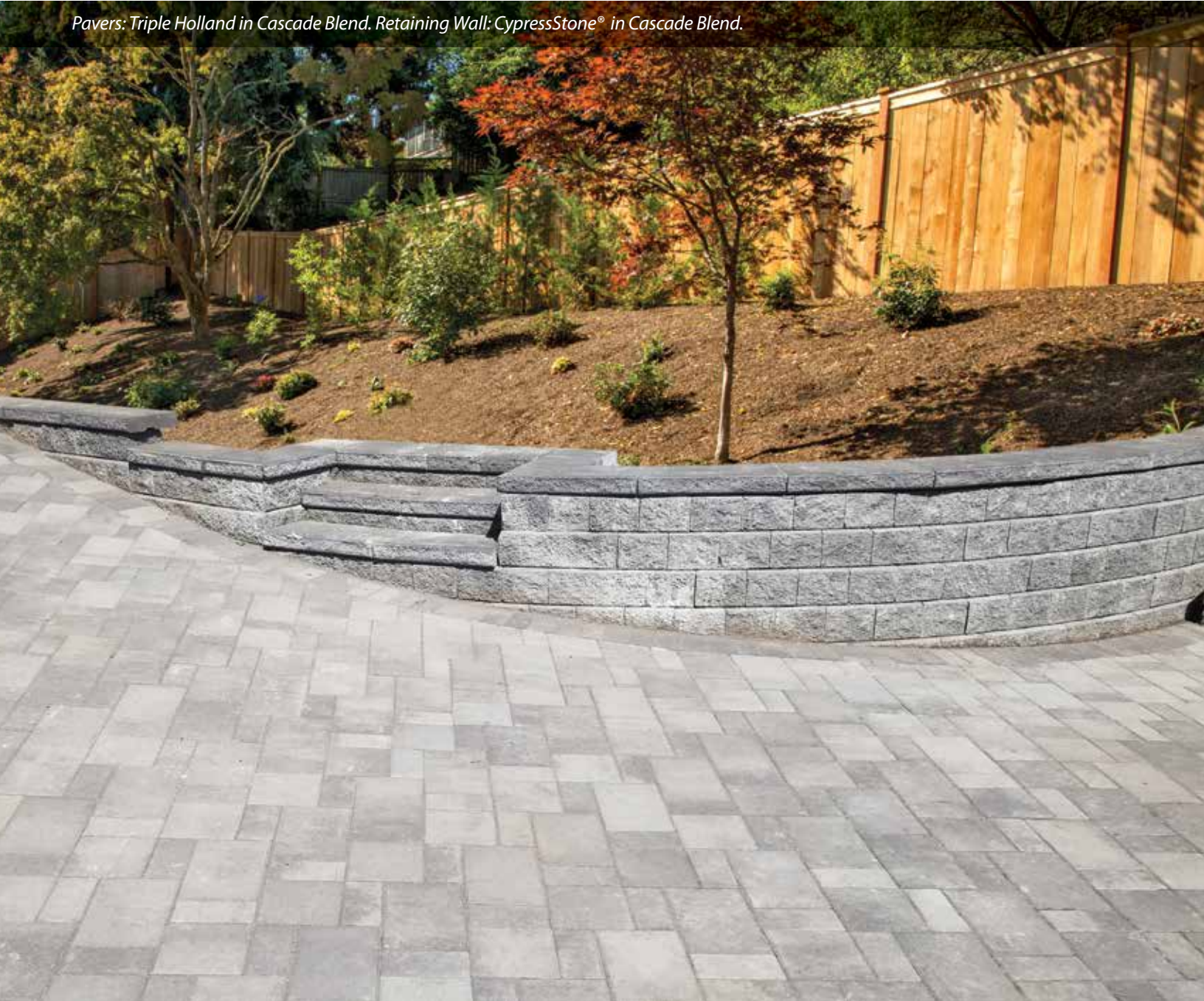
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