

LANDSCAPES NORTH

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2015

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THE NEED FOR MUNICIPAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

by Jay Lazzarin, LMBCSLA, LMCSLA, ASLA

The benefits of municipal parks and open spaces are numerous; from public health and physical activity; to economic benefits of increased property values; tourism; environmental benefits of pollution abatement; storm water retention; and social benefits of interaction through recreational team play and crime reduction.

However, over the past few years, budget constraints from most decision makers, municipal, provincial, and federal; parks and open spaces have been one of the first to be targeted and unfortunately viewed as 'amenities' rather than necessities. Yes, municipal infrastructure and public utilities which are essential to our way of life, are aging and deteriorating, and require funding. However, in all this focus on aging utilities, development and maintenance of parks and open spaces seem to be secondary or forgotten.

I am only suggesting that park and open space funding receive its due share and attention. A stronger argument maybe needed to convince decision makers that the numerous park / open space benefits strengthen our



High maintenance flower beds lacking required attention.



*Reference: www.Huffingtonpost.ca
Sustainable Children's Playground in Richmond, BC
Adds interest with minimum maintenance.*

communities, make our cities and neighbourhoods more attractive places to live and work, and improve our physical and psychological health.

In Northern BC, the situation with quantity of park/open space is not as severe as in most major urban centres. However, in many northern communities less and less resources are being made available to develop these parks and maintain the status quo. As a result, many designated park areas remain undeveloped and unused. At the same time, numerous developed parks are receiving less maintenance and as a consequence their usage declines, appearance is less appealing, and in many instances become targets for vandalism and / or present safety concerns for its users.

To adapt to these financial pressures park planners, designers and maintenance staff need to do their part and find innovative ways to reduce the overall maintenance costs and still develop appealing designs for everyone's enjoyment and benefit.

ACCESSIBLE LANDSCAPES



By Laurelin Svisdahl, Landscape Architect, MBCSLA, CSLA

Photos Provided by Dirk Mendel

An increasingly important consideration for both new developments and renewal of landscapes and buildings is accessibility and universal access for everyone, and it goes beyond wheelchair and walker ramps for entry ways and curbs. The accessibly designed site looks to include all user groups: people with temporary injuries, pregnant women, small children and strollers, the elderly, hearing and visually impaired, even travellers or delivery persons with roller bags and trollies will appreciate the small details that make a real difference in the circulation and usability of a site.

Accessibility also includes wider pathways and doors to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters, varied seating heights and leaning rest places, barrier free thoroughfares across the site and coordination between different developments, accessible signs and wayfinding programs. Diversity and inclusivity are hallmarks of increasingly accessible environments.

There are several simple ways to make a space more accessible and inclusive. With a little thoughtful planning to incorporate these ideas into a site, realizing a more inclusive design doesn't have to mean specialized equipment, sacrificing aesthetics, or incurring exorbitantly higher costs. For example, there are many general considerations the designer can make such as: incorporate barrier free access to shady spaces so there are cool places to rest and sit; furniture and features in the landscape such as trash cans, water fountains, benches picnic tables should accommodate diverse accessibility needs including lower reach heights and knee clearance for adults and children using wheelchairs, ensure washrooms are accessible and doorways thresholds are barrier free / minimal slopes).

Some important elements in the landscape to think about:

Pathways - Flat, level ground is obviously easiest and best to accommodate everyone's needs. Unfortunately this isn't always possible on every site. Nevertheless, in most cases, a little common sense goes a long way. Whenever possible choose the most level route with running slopes of less than 1:20 (5%) and cross slopes of less than 1:50 (2%). Where situations



won't allow this, ramps may be designed with appropriate widths, railings, landings and edge protection and a maximum 1:12 (8%) slope. Avoid narrow pathways, a space of 1.5 x 1.5 meters is required for a manual wheelchair to turn around, and also to allow two wheel chairs to pass each other, but adding extra width for accompany-



ing pedestrians, frequent rest areas (approximately every 30meters) and on longer pathways locating benches every 200 meters

enhances the overall comfort and experience for everyone. Choose firm surface materials, avoiding sands and loose granular materials that may shift. Different textures (smooth brick pavers on the patio, natural stone pavers and stamped and textured concrete) can be incorporated to help people with sensory impairments navigate through a site, as well as adding pleasing and decorative effects. Never underestimate the importance of proper drainage to help maintain site attributes against weather and to keep routes clear of puddling water and winter ice build up.

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Parking - Ensure adequate parking allocation of space for people with physical and mobility challenges by providing enough room to accommodate specialized vehicles and safe, barrier free access routes that connect parking areas conveniently and directly to the landscape or building destination. Retaining walls and planter edges make excellent walking supports and rest spots, and may be further accommodating when the seating and leaning opportunities are constructed at different heights and sizes to better meet the needs of more people. Incorporate handholds and grip bars to provide extra support and assistance.

Signs & Wayfinding - Standards and principles of Accessible Graphic Design (font size, style, letter and graphics spacing, width-to-height ratio, colour contrast) are important when designing signs to ensure legibility for people with visual impairments and also utilizing illustrative graphics and universally understood symbols can assist children and second language visitors understand important information and site navigation.

Playspaces - An important factor when designing and developing playgrounds and renovating existing play is the diversity of challenges children may face, including mobility, vision, auditory and developmental. Most ideal are design features that address the widest range of needs in order to make the entire playground and all its spaces usable and inclusive for everyone, including parents and guardians: raised sand and play tables; incorporate natural elements as play features, such as plants, water, sand and pebbles; choose equipment that can accommodate everyone - larger tunnels, roller slides, saucer swings, play huts and forts.



Make accessible routes through the playground that are designed with adequate space to manoeuvre in and around all play equipment, ramps and boardwalks that provide easy access to elevated spaces. Avoid pathway surfaces such as pea gravel and sand that will

exclude children with mobility needs and wheeled aides. Instead, consider more accessible options such as poured-in-place rubber and rubber tile or engineered wood fibre surfaces. Rubber surfacing can help keep costs down when used selectively in the design and in combination with other products. Flush access with a maximum 1/2" drop onto play surfaces. Use of ramps, curb cuts or bridges can be used in places where providing a flush access is not possible. Where possible site grading and berming can be done to allow access around and up to all equipment.

Frequent and proper maintenance also plays a key role in safety and success of any landscape, so materials that are tough, easily repaired and cleaned will enhance the accessibility as well as the sustainability of the space.

Some great references:

Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) standard for children's play spaces, www.csagroup.org

ADA Standards for Accessible Design, ada.gov

'Accessibility' A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design, RGD Ontario

GIVE A TREE A HUG

by Beverley Gray, 'The Boreal Herbal', 2011.

I am a tree hugger! Hugging trees helps me slow down, become grounded, and is quieting to my essence. When I'm hugging a tree, I like to imagine that I'm hugging the tree heart to heart. I imagine that our roots are one and that our crowns are both extending toward the cosmos.

Trees are ancient guardians for the Earth, the elders of the land; they have so much to offer us. While hugging a tree, remember to not just receive, but also to be gracious and reciprocate, offering your gratitude for its teachings and majestic beauty.



Featured projects

BC HYDRO REGIONAL OFFICE

Client: BC Hydro

Architect: Omicron Architecture, Planning & Construction

Landscape Architect: Jay Lazzarin

Landscape Contractor: Richbar Nursery Ltd.

Completed: Spring 2015

Landscape Construction Cost: \$350,000

To meet the client's goal to reduce ongoing maintenance costs, a number of proven strategies were incorporated into the landscape design, including:

(i) incorporating low growing, drought resistant grass species, eliminating the need for an irrigation system as well as weekly lawn mowing, (ii) incorporating a high percentage of coniferous trees and shrubs, ensuring year round foliage and color, and reducing maintenance tasks associated with pruning, leaf raking / collection and (iii) provide generous sized snow storage areas for the large parking lots, eliminating the need and costs associated with offsite snow removal.



CURT GARLAND COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRE

Client: Salvation Army, Prince George

Architect: G.W. Steward Architects

Landscape Architect: Jay Lazzarin

Landscape Contractor: Core Landscaping Ltd.

Completed: Summer 2015

Landscape Construction Cost: \$65,000

With a generous donation from a local business person, a former dairy products storage and transportation depot is transformed into a major food bank, thrift store and administration centre for the local Salvation Army.

Working with a limited budget, the existing, unkept landscaping received a major facelift that included: (i) regrading and the incorporation of an irrigation system to ensure healthy, green lawn areas throughout the growing season, (ii) installation of trees to screen adjacent parking areas and to meet City of Prince George Landscape zoning requirements, and (iii) entry sign and associated precast concrete block planting beds that enhances the character of the site, and provides a strategic focal point at this busy intersection.



Featured Plants

We all adore the fragrance of the multi flowered blooming lilacs. Most of us associate lilacs with the official arrival of spring, and characterize them as being either light purple or white in color, growing to large heights of 10' - 15', and spreading with numerous root suckers. These are typical traits of the common French Lilac, which is in greatest abundance throughout central and northern British Columbia. However, there are several newer hybrids and varieties with unique characteristics worth considering for your garden.

Dwarf Korean Lilac (*Syringa meyeri* 'Palbin')

Height: 1.25m

Spread: 1.25m

Hardiness: Zone 3

Characteristics: Lavender, fragrant flowers in late spring.

One of the smallest lilacs, suitable for tight areas; roundish in shape. Grows in full sun to partial shade. Prune only if required after flowering.



Miss Kim Lilac (*Syringa patula*)

Height: 1.5m to 2m

Spread: 1.25m to 2m

Hardiness: Zone 3

Characteristics: Lavender flowers. Blooms later than the French Lilacs, (usually mid-June). More fragrant than most lilacs; green foliage turns a deep burgundy red in the fall.

'Coral' Preston Lilac (*Syringa x prestoniae*)

Height: 2.25m

Spread: 1.25m to 1.5m

Hardiness: Zone 2

Characteristics: Upright growth habit; pink flowers in early summer; non suckering; multi-stemmed; low maintenance shrub that attracts butterflies to the garden.



Japanese Tree Lilac (*Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk')

Height: 5m

Spread: 3m

Hardiness: Zone 3

Characteristics: This small specimen tree or large multi-stemmed shrub has clusters of fragrant, creamy-white flowers in spring. Dark green foliage and glossy-brown bark with attractive lenticels are also appealing.

Questions & Answers: Tips on installing a Hedge

One row or more? Hedges are usually planted in one row. However, if you have enough space in your garden and would like to get a denser hedge in a shorter time, you might consider planting a double row hedge.

Formal or informal? Formal hedges require regular bi-annual pruning to achieve a uniform, geometric shape. Height and spread can vary from 0.2 to 2.5 m depending on the shrub type but in most instances the width of larger shrubs is pruned back to approximately 1.0 m. Informal hedges grow faster as they don't require regular pruning but tend to become leggy and permeable over time. Informal hedges are wider and can vary from 1.5 to 4 m in width on average, depending on the size of a chosen specimen. If you would like to grow an ornamental hedge, you could select shrubs with showy flowers and/or fruit and grow them in an informal hedge as formal hedges produce less flowers and fruit.



Deciduous or coniferous? Deciduous hedges are perfect for creating a border and seasonal screen in your garden. Cheaper price is their main advantage, compared

to coniferous hedges. In addition, many deciduous shrubs have notable decorative attributes such as colourful leaves, flowers, and fruit which help to create a more exciting and visually pleasing hedge. However, if you want to create a dense hedge all year round, an effective noise and wind buffer, you could consider investing in a coniferous hedge such as upright junipers for sunny locations or cedars for shady areas.



How to plant a hedge? Large shrubs and trees are usually planted in separate square pits, big enough to accommodate the root ball and ensure at least 0.1 m space around it. Shrubs of small and medium sizes are planted in ditches, approximately 0.5 m deep and 0.5-0.7 m wide (for a one row hedge) or 0.7 - 0.9 m wide (for a double row hedge). Shrubs and trees are planted similar to specimen planting, except the planting site is continuous. To obtain a denser screen it is recommended the shrubs or trees be installed approximately 2/3 to 1/2 distance one would normally space for individual, specimen planting.



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