President’s Message

The OALA is at an exciting point in its history. The profession continues to grow, both in membership and breadth of practice. OALA Council is listening and acting on what the membership has told us you want. At the February, 2011, Council meeting, we approved a new three-year Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan is based on the membership survey, together with input from focus groups and Council workshops. A copy of the Strategic Plan will be available at the March Conference/AGM and will be posted on the OALA website. As President, I will continue to reach out to students, allied professionals, and government, and help support our members and associates.

Council recently approved a recommendation to implement an OALA Continuing Education program. This will be presented, in greater detail, to the members for approval at the 2011 AGM. Council envisions that the program would be phased in during 2011 and 2012 and would be similar to other programs offered and required by allied professions as well as the American Society of Landscape Architects.

I am pleased to advise you that our Association is in great financial health and our reserve fund has been re-invested using a newly approved reserve fund policy. The Budget Committee has done an excellent job of researching and drafting new policies for the reserve fund to guide the OALA into the future.

A number of important issues face the Association, and Council has started investigating the pros and cons of a Practice Act. An article in Ground 12, “Issues and Debates,” discussed a Practice Act. This article has created significant and heated discussion, particularly with O.P.P.I. (Ontario Professional Planners Institute). It is important to stress that this article presents the opinions of two OALA members and does not represent the views of Council or the Association. It certainly did open the issues and debates of a Practice Act.

Our Annual Conference and AGM will be held on March 25th at a wonderful and transit-accessible facility in downtown Toronto. Our Continuing Education Committee (C.E.C.) has organized an excellent program which we think you will enjoy. Collectively, we can all look forward to a stronger organization as we advance into the future. I appreciate the trust you have placed in me as President as I represent all of us on many important issues.

GLENNA. O’CONNOR, OALA
PRESIDENT@OALA.CA

Editorial Board Message

The role of parks in landscape architecture is iconic. Linked to the birth of the profession itself through Frederick Law Olmsted, parks foreground the vital role of public space in cities as they hold the promise of providing accessible space for all. Multiple activities take place simultaneously in parks with a range of programming and, just as important, unprogrammed space for diverse users. As such they embody and also facilitate multiple forms of community. Spraying from this context, our roundtable discussion asks “whose park is it?” as a way to focus on the role of city parks governance.

The egalitarian values espoused by Olmsted continue today in public park design. Translating such values into built work, however, poses the challenge to designers of interpreting what various stakeholders want in a park and strategizing around sometimes competing demands.

Parks also occupy an iconic place in city-building through their role as catalysts for neighbourhood development. Municipalities, developers, and landscape architects are working together to create new parks and renovate existing landscapes into parks with this catalytic role in mind. Our snapshot of numerous Ontario cities and towns with waterfront parks currently being developed (including both lake- and river-front lands) is a case in point.

The role of parks as public space and community builders necessarily foregrounds the role of process in park design. Interviews with Donna Hinde, OALA, and Linda Irvine, OALA, offer fascinating insight into the changing approaches to public consultation and ground-breaking research methods in city park design.

The funding structure and construction timeline for large national parks is always a concern for landscape architects. Alissa North, OALA, provides an update on Downsview Park and reviews the ten-year process to date with an eye on the question of maintaining the design integrity of the competition-winning scheme.

We hope that this issue provides readers with an expanded vocabulary for new ideas and processes in park design and management, and reminds us all of the vital social and cultural role of parks.

NANCY CHATER, OALA, AND FUNG LEE, OALA, CO-CHAIRS, EDITORIAL BOARD

Please join us for a public forum with notable participants including landscape architects, park advocates, planners, and academics, on April 7th, 2011, at the Daniels Faculty of Landscape, Architecture and Design, University of Toronto, for a lively conversation about the future of our city parks. Visit the OALA website, www.oala.ca, for more details.
About Ground

Ground: Landscape Architect Quarterly is published by the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects and provides an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information related to the profession of landscape architecture.

Letters to the editor, article proposals, and feedback are encouraged. For submission guidelines, contact Ground at magazine@oala.ca. Ground reserves the right to edit all submissions. The views expressed in the magazine are those of the writers and not necessarily the views of the OALA and its Governing Council.

Upcoming Issues of Ground

Ground 14 (Summer): Productive Landscapes
Deadline for advertising space reservations: April 14, 2011

Ground 15 (Fall): Infrastructure and Planning
Deadline for editorial proposals: April 21, 2011
Deadline for advertising space reservations: July 21, 2011

Ground 16 (Winter): Real/Artificial
Deadline for editorial proposals: July 29, 2011
Deadline for advertising space reservations: October 28, 2011

Clarification

The article “Issues and Debates: Is it time for an OALA practice act?” published in Ground 12 [Winter 2010] presents the candid personal opinions of two association members familiar with the topic in order to engage discussion and foster awareness of the issues explored in the article. The article does not represent the views or opinions of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects, its officers, or staff. The OALA continues to explore all facets of this important issue, both with the OALA membership and with allied professionals.

Ground encourages discussion and welcomes letters to the editor on this and any other topic covered in the magazine.
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Up Front: Information on the Ground

MEMORALS from Korea to Canada

Thousands of Koreans know of him and speak of his legacy, yet here in Canada he is virtually unknown. Dr. Frank Schofield—a humble, unassuming Canadian veterinarian—is regarded as a national hero in Korea for his dedication to the people and the Republic of Korea. He is the only foreigner honoured with burial in the Patriots section of the Seoul National Cemetery. University departments are named after him, a softball league in Seoul with more than 1,000 teams bears his picture on the league’s baseball caps, and a chamber in the Korean Consulate is named in his honour.

Frank W. Schofield arrived in Korea in 1916 as a Christian missionary. While teaching in Seoul, he vigilantly documented and photographed the horrors of the military rule. He sent stories of torture and slaying to North American newspapers in hopes of inciting an intervention.

Schofield’s harsh criticism of Japanese colonial policy led to his being described as “one of the principal agitators” by the Japanese. His public declarations and criticisms became increasingly dissonant. He left Korea in 1920 when he was quietly recalled by the Presbyterian Church, and became a distinguished professor and researcher at the University of Guelph. Following his retirement in 1955, he returned to Korea where he lived until his death in 1970, teaching medicine and religion, and helping the less fortunate.

At a recent gala in Toronto, the Ontario Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Richard Chan, said that Dr. Schofield “cared more about the world than he did about himself.” To commemorate the life of Dr. Frank Schofield, a non-profit organization was formed five years ago in Toronto. The Dr. Schofield Memorial Foundation has succeeded in attaining a National Historic Person designation from Parks Canada, and is in the midst of building a statue and commemorative garden. After an exhaustive search for a suitable location, the group finally formed a partnership with the Toronto Zoo, which dedicated 0.5 ha in their Eurasia section for the creation of a traditional Korean garden as a setting for a statue of Dr. Schofield.

Korean gardens are a rarity, with only a handful located outside of Korea. There are Korean gardens in Vancouver, Los Angeles, Cairo, Ankara, Mexico City, Berlin, Frankfurt, and two in France. The design team’s first task was to define the essence of a Korean garden given the many cultural influences, from the ancient Korean Shamanism to Buddhism, Confucianism, the Joseon era, and post-war modern expressionism. Our design team of Terraplan Landscape...
Architects and JCI Architects decided to recreate the essence of the traditional Korean garden that Dr. Schofield would have encountered ninety years ago.

Traditional Korean gardens are quite different from the well-known Japanese gardens, which use artistic arrangements of water, rock, and moss, and the Chinese gardens, which use structure and form to create very dramatic, stylized gardens. The traditional Korean garden, on the other hand, derives its form from nature and integrates garden elements with natural processes, creating an unassuming, simple, unforced landscape that looks almost as if it simply evolved without much thought or planning.

However, very strict rules are used to create a fusion of man-made elements and nature in a traditional Korean garden. Principles of Korean pongsoo, or feng shui, traditionally define the orientation of garden elements along a north-south axis to take advantage of the summer shade and winter sun. Water is regarded as a life force that often determined the location of the village in the landscape. Rocks are believed to be more powerful than water and their arrangement in the garden is used for worship, as sculpture, for walkways, and to construct ponds.

But perhaps the most important design element is to allow the earth’s natural form, drainage pattern, and vegetation to serve as the tapestry upon which the garden elements are placed. Garden elements are placed in nature rather than nature being transformed into the garden. These ancient Korean environmental principles were used centuries before Ian McHarg’s classic, Design With Nature, made its way to the bookshelf.

The statue of Dr. Schofield (Phase 1) was installed in the summer of 2010 with a construction budget of $75,000 (not including the statue). The statue is elevated and surrounded by a seatwall and garden, a prominent though discreet location for an unassuming man. The opening ceremony was attended by dignitaries from Korea and Canada, including Dr. Un-Chan Chung, the former Prime Minister of Korea.

The detailed design of Phase 2, with a construction budget of $500,000, has been completed and will begin construction this spring. The Phase 2 design includes a traditional wooden gateway and stone wall, with jangseung (wooden totem poles) to guard against evil spirits. A path through a grove of cherry trees leads to a large, square lily pond surrounded by a stone walkway and a wooden viewing pagoda, all garden elements carefully aligned with a statue of Dr. Schofield and the existing stormwater management pond to the east.

Fields of wildflowers with carefully positioned naturalistic gardens of chrysanthemums and rose-of-sharon, Korea’s national flower, extend throughout the garden, creating a relaxed, unassuming ambience. All plant materials from groundcovers to trees are species that are typically found in Korea, although the cultivars will vary. Trees include Korean pine (Pinus koraiensis), Korean fir (Abies koreana), three-flowered maple (Acer triflorum), maidenhair tree (Gingko biloba), and Korean spice (Viburnum carlesii).

The final phase will have a construction budget of $3.5 million, and will be located north of the square lily pond. Two traditional Korean buildings and a viewing platform will be oriented toward a central stone plaza. The quintessential Korean artistry will be prominent in the roof details of the buildings. The space has been designed to host weddings, lectures, festivities, and other cultural events. Below the buildings and courtyard will be a modern underground interpretation facility where the life and significant contributions of Dr. Schofield will be displayed creatively.

The garden has been carefully designed to accommodate the 1.5 million year-round visitors to the Toronto Zoo, as well as a new passenger train through the Eurasia exhibit to be known as the Orient Express. The end result will be a fusion of the traditional and the modern, and of two cultures—Korean and Canadian. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn about a significant figure in world history, as well as the elements of a traditional Korean garden.

TEXT BY JANIS FEDOROWICK, OALA, OPP, MCIP, RPP. A FREELANCE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND URBAN PLANNER WHO SPECIALIZES IN HISTORIC/CULTURAL AND NATURAL LANDSCAPES, AND URBAN DESIGN. SHE WAS ON THE DESIGN TEAM FOR THE GARDEN ALONG WITH PAUL MARSALA, OALA, FROM TERRAPLAN AND JAEGAP CHUNG FROM JCI ARCHITECTS.
As Canadians, many of us feel a national sense of pride in our ability to embrace the winter weather. But most people do not venture outside nearly as often in the cold season as in summer, spring, and fall. Our public parks remain vastly under-utilized during winter, with the exception of a few outdoor skating rinks and tobogganing hills—weather permitting. And while many Canadians enjoy ice hockey and skiing, these activities require expensive equipment and fees, and can be inaccessible to those with limited funds and/or limited mobility.

How can we better animate our parks in winter? Two hugely popular Canadian winter festivals—Carnaval in Quebec City and Winterlude in Ottawa and Gatineau—manage to persuade hoards of people to get outside and enjoy the unique recreational experiences possible in the depths of winter. I spoke with head designers and operations staff from Winterlude and Carnaval to get a deeper understanding of how we can better animate our parks in winter. Clearly, there are significant differences between designing and operating a temporary festival and a permanent public park. However, the festivals can provide landscape architects and designers with an eclectic array of ideas to spark some fresh thinking about how public parks can be used in the off season.

Snowscapes

Both of the festivals feature large-scale temporary snowscapes for tobogganing. Claude Potvin of the National Capital Commission (INCCI) describes how Winterlude’s “Snowflake Kingdom” is created at Parc Jacques-Cartier in Gatineau. In the past, the structure was made from natural snow trucked on site from municipal parking lots. Fifteen years ago, NCC switched to artificial snow produced by snow canons. The canons required the installation of a million-dollar electrical system and extensive water hookups. It takes about a month to produce all of the snow needed. The entire site is reinforced with a geo-synthetic grid to help alleviate the immense soil compaction caused by the weight of the structure. The basic layout remains the same, with the snow slides facing northeast to minimize melting, while the themes changes every year and is reflected in decorative detailing. Volunteers monitor traffic flow and ensure safety while the snow slides are open, and the site is closed off and monitored by security at night.

Lighting

Yolande Charette, head of Winterlude’s lighting design, describes the objectives of the festival’s lighting: to create a festive, urban ambience and to draw people into park sites that become special destinations in otherwise overlooked areas. The lighting often utilizes surrounding buildings and structures, and highlights ice and snow sculptures at night. In recent years, LED lights have helped reduce energy costs and all the lights are switched off at 1 a.m.

Microclimate

Organizers of both festivals stress the importance of optimizing comfortable microclimates by designing the festival sites to take advantage of favourable solar orientation and by using various wind-screening devices such as fabric banners, vegetation screens, and clusters of food kiosks, in addition to heated shelters and warming fires. Carnaval’s arctic spa village even offers outdoor hot tubs and saunas.

Movement and Sensory Input

Potvin’s advice is to create a variety of opportunities to stay warm through movement and exercise. The Rideau Canal Skateway is enjoyed by skaters and walkers alike, and the entry ramps are designed to be fully accessible. Gatineau Park offers free snowshoe rentals and guided tours, including star-gazing tours at night. Another strategy is to distract visitors from the cold by stimulating the senses through music, entertainment, art, and food. Carnaval’s operation manager, Daniel Bouchard, notes that the events that draw the largest crowds are the night parades, outdoor concerts, dance parties, international snow sculpture exhibit, and the giant inflatable balloons. Each year, the festival introduces something new. “The hardest part,” says Bouchard, “is deciding which event to retire in order to make room for a new event.”

High-Tech Winter Fun

While the festivals celebrate the temporality of winter by using snow and ice as building materials and play surfaces, new technologies offer more permanent and low-maintenance solutions that might be better suited to public parks. Synthetic ice is a low-cost, low-maintenance, and energy-efficient alternative to refrigerated ice and alleviates the need for relying on increasingly unpredictable weather conditions for naturally frozen ice. The surfacing can be installed permanently or seasonally to create hockey rinks over existing tennis courts or skating trails over existing pathways and running tracks. Synthetic snow surfaces, currently used at summer training facilities for snowboarders, skiers and ski jumpers, etc., can be installed to create either year-round or seasonal toboggan ing hills on specially sculpted landforms or on existing slopes.

When I asked the festival staff if they thought there were any features or strategies that might successfully translate into permanent park features, they answered unanimously, “No.” This caught me by surprise. Surely there is something of permanent value to gain from the designs of temporary winter festival spaces. Surely this is a subject area that calls for greater imagination from Canadian landscape architects in promoting the use of our parks in winter.

TEXT BY BEATRICE SABAGA TAYLOR, A LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATE IN THE PARKS DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT OF THE TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL.

IMAGE/ Courtesy Winterlude
People often respond to skateboarders with fear and apprehension. Stereotypical images of noisy teenagers hanging out, doing drugs, vandalizing the area, are conjured simply by the idea of having a recreational space devoted to “skaters” opened in a community. “There were lots of people who thought a skateboard park was a great idea,” says Bill Gurney, OALA, who pauses for a moment before adding the kicker: “Just not here!” Gurney is referring to the development of the first skateboard park to be built in Toronto’s west end: the Eighth Street Park near Islington and Lake Shore Boulevard, which will open this spring and which Gurney designed.

Gurney is a rare breed. A landscape architect who specializes in skateboard park design, he’s been at it for more than six years, though he’s been a skateboarder himself for a lot longer than that, since he was seven. With the design of approximately thirty skateboard parks to his credit, he now works for New Line Skateparks, a firm that has been responsible for more than 100 such parks internationally.

Perhaps because he grew up experiencing the marginalization skateboarders are subjected to, Gurney is passionate in his defence of the sport and the need for municipalities to accommodate skateboard enthusiasts in their park plans. “If you go to any city or town, large or small, there are opportunities and places in parks to play hockey, soccer, or tennis. Skateboarding should be no different.” Besides, as Gurney points out, the activity will happen whether sanctioned or not: “This is why the public has such a negative attitude towards skateboarding, because they see kids doing it where they shouldn’t.” It is interesting to note that skateboarding is probably the only sport for which hardware is regularly installed in public spaces in order to prevent the activity from occurring. But as any city dweller knows, the creative resources of skateboarders can outwit any structural impediment put in their way—indeed, it almost seems to encourage them.

“When you’re a skateboarder,” says Gurney, “you look at the city with different eyes. What you see is opportunity.” This opportunistic use of the urban environment has a committed subculture complete with its own vernacular, a muscular language steeped in dizzying action—a front side nose slide, for example, or flipping an eight-stair set. What Gurney is interested in doing in his designs is capturing the thrill of unfettered urban exploration and containing it (without taming it) in the more controlled environment of a park. “To a skateboarder, the city is a playground. We try to take that authentic downtown street-skating feel and detail the park design so it has the look and feel of street-skating.” But that doesn’t mean sacrificing aesthetics for gritty urban authenticity, he stresses. “We use a lot of architectural details such as coloured concrete, textured concrete, contained planter areas, LED lighting—these all contribute to the urban plaza look and feel.”

Because skateboard park design is a relatively new field, it offers designers a high degree of creative latitude and a lot of room for experimentation and problem solving. In much the same way that skateboarding has no rules, no scorecards, no timekeepers, and no coaches, skateboard park design has more open parameters than conventional park design. “It’s relatively unstructured,” says Gurney, “when compared to something like a soccer field, where the parameters are set. In skateboard park design, there are few set standards so every design is one of a kind and can be really organic.” New Line Skateparks also involves youth in the design development stage. “There are many benefits to this approach,” says Gurney: “It empowers the youth, fostering a sense of ownership in the community and promoting a unique brand of stewardship crucial to a project’s overall success.”

Gurney considers cast-in-place concrete the best material for building a skateboard park. “There’s a freedom with cast-in-place concrete that allows it to take any form.” However, challenges include accommodating the natural expansion qualities of concrete—“you can’t detail joints like in sidewalks, for example”—and the specialized application techniques for concrete, often blown through an air hose—“you need an experienced shotcrete nozzleman.” For Gurney, one of the biggest challenges in
this kind of work is ensuring competent contractors are selected to do the job: “Canada has a select group of excellent skatepark-specific concrete contractors. Municipalities simply need to be vigilant with their tender guidelines to ensure that qualified firms aren’t out-bid by candidates without proper qualifications.”

Conjuring an image that is as poetic as it is practical, Gurney says that a skateboard park, with its “boat-load of concrete,” is like a skin on the ground: “a floating structure that moves and floats with the earth.” Clearly, the philosophical aspects of the sport—and designing for the sport—hold great appeal for Gurney. “Skateboarders always look happy,” he says, as he describes a kid skateboarding the wrong way, against traffic, on Lake Shore Boulevard, wearing a hoody and smiling. Gurney, too, is wearing a hoody (his is emblazoned with New Line Skateparks) and he’s smiling: “Look, when it comes right down to it, skateboarding is a lot of fun.”

TEXT BY LORRAINE JOHNSON, EDITOR OF GROUND AND THE AUTHOR OF CITY FARMER: ADVENTURES IN URBAN FOOD GROWING.

IMAGES/ New Line Skateparks
Aldo van Eyck was given the task of designing playgrounds while he was an employee at the Urban Development Division of Public Works (1947–1951). The Site Preparation Division of Public Works chose the playground sites. Initially, the playgrounds were designed for interstitial spaces in the centre city, such as abandoned lots between buildings, curb extensions, or traffic islands, where the only public places to play were in streets increasingly occupied by cars. The new playgrounds were extremely popular, as evidenced by archival letters and photographs. Due to their success, van Eyck continued his association with Public Works when he went into private practice in 1951, continuing to design playgrounds for the inner city, as well as for the courtyards of the new housing projects of the late 1950s and 1960s, and the Sports Parks of the 1970s.

van Eyck’s playgrounds are a product of a specific opportunity presented by post-WWII Amsterdam, but they demonstrate several principles that are particularly relevant to contemporary park and playground design.

**Simplicity and Flexibility**

Three types of static elements were included in most van Eyck designs: concrete sandpits, metal climbing or somersault frames, and concrete play tables/bollards/stacks. Constructed from a limited palette of tough urban materials, the play objects emphasized open, non-proscriptive play. Each object or combination could be used for multiple purposes, by more than one child at a time, and by children (and adults) of a range of ages. A climbing dome as a meeting place, a mountain to scale, or an obstacle to weave through—children were free to use these seemingly everyday objects as they pleased, testing their boundaries, constructing new worlds, and developing both their physical and mental agility.

**Social Interaction and Place Making**

van Eyck’s playgrounds often served families who had little or no access to private outdoor space, creating a welcoming, safe environment for families to meet and interact with their neighbours. Wood benches,
low walls, and shrubs or trees often defined the playground edges, providing shaded areas as well as seating for caregiver interaction and child supervision. Not everyone appreciated having a playground located next to their house, but few could deny its effect in changing a deserted, underused, or unsafe space into a place of life, activity, and gathering. The simple design and dynamic composition of the play objects encouraged interaction and imaginative play between children of different ages. In particular, the sturdy construction and universal play appeal of van Eyck’s sandpits made them the centre of gravity for many of the playgrounds.

A Public Network
When viewed on a city-wide scale, Amsterdam’s network of playgrounds was important to improving the social and physical health of each block, building, or neighbourhood where they were located. But the organic development of this decentralized network also demonstrated a political and financial commitment to meeting the needs of underserved populations— in this case, children and families. Although the majority of these playgrounds no longer exist or have been altered beyond recognition, they raise the question of the importance of building critical public places and of claiming public space for public purposes, even if they are temporary. Today’s cities are filled with underused, transitional spaces that could be given a public function if the political will could surmount legal and other concerns in order to improve the lives of city residents.

All of these principles are worth remembering in an era of tight budgets and exhaustive programmatic and ecological requirements. Embedding multiple functions in simple forms can create dynamic environments that are both performative and attractive to the widest range of visitors. Adapting a needed public space typology to specific sites can empower residents to engage in their communities while advocating for city-wide practices of equity and inclusion.

van Eyck’s legacy, then, is not only in the beauty and simplicity of his designs or their ability to create community places from leftover spaces, but also in their widespread distribution, adapting a vocabulary of experiential learning to each site to create a legible, city-wide infrastructure of play, which broadened the horizons of generations of Dutch children and now serves as an example for contemporary practices of urban landscape design.

For more information, see Aldo van Eyck: The Playgrounds and the City, edited by Liane Lefaivre and Ingeborg de Roode (Rotterdam: NAi [in cooperation with Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam], 2002). This book of essays, photographs, and maps is the primary source for this article and served as the catalogue for the 2002 exhibition “Design for children: Playgrounds by Aldo van Eyck, furniture and toys” at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

TEXT BY MELISSA CATE CHRST, OALA, A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT LIVING IN SEATTLE.
Whose Park Is It?

A dialogue about creating vibrant urban park spaces in which communities have meaningful input and perhaps even control.

Netani Stuart (NS): When we work on the design of a park, we’re not just working on the design, execution, and construction— we’re working for the life of the park. Consultation with the community is key. Is there a way you can tie the design and that consultation process into something that lasts longer, that can stay in the park, with the community, that they can use?

Donna Hinde (DH): It’s about dialogue. When dialogue happens in a positive way, there is a kind of managing of expectations that happens naturally. When there isn’t dialogue, different groups have different expectations and there’s just too much expected out of one park and out of one process. So the dialogue is critical on all levels. It’s not just about managing the community; it’s about dialogue between all of the players.

NS: Park improvement projects, and park construction projects, can become an impetus for the development of a community of people who might be interested in parks and who can follow through and remain interested in parks.

Anna Hill (AH): The underpinning of a successful public space is a very transparent and rigorous communication process. In order for the physical forms to be embraced, and to succeed, it really has to start with taking the time to include as many neighbourhood stakeholders as possible, right from day one. There has to be an understanding, within the councillor’s office and the parks department and private sector firms, that it’s worth it to spend the money to have that really rigorous public communication process and consultation process from the beginning.

Dave Harvey (DH): It can be difficult to convince clients to put additional resources into that planning, but it should be looked upon as almost a branch of community capacity building. Part of the legacy of the capital improvement can be a better engaged community, a community that feels as if they own more of the park. Part of the dialogue could include ongoing maintenance issues, ongoing opportunities for the community to get directly involved. If we are building facility “A,” are there opportunities for community volunteers, or local businesses, to be part of maintaining that area, or somehow involved? By actually investing in the process and dialogue, you’re really doing much more than just investing in how the design is the best.

Dave Meslin (DM): What’s missing is enough resources to have enough consultation. In the long run, I think it’s cheaper to have the consultation up front, so you don’t have to redo the whole thing.

David Leinster (DL): The issue, too, around public space, is that when we engage the broader public, it’s not just one group we need to have a dialogue with. There are many perspectives. It’s interesting too that we often get the best response to a project when there’s some kind of controversy.

NS: Depending on the size of the park and what kind of things it offers, a park can be a resource for the entire city, and it can be a resource for the people who live next door. The thing about parks is that they’re so fraught, and so invested with emotion—they are all things to all people. They involve children, they involve property values, they involve people’s access to anything natural,
so when you live next door to a park, it's your park. Somebody might be farming in it, somebody else might need to sleep in it because it's the only place they've got to sleep... When we're talking about engaging a broader community, how do you know how big the community is that you need to engage with? How do you make sure that the park you're designing, or the park you are helping to manage, remains a public asset and not something that's just for you or your neighbours? How do we guard against, or make decisions about, that kind of thing?

**Jane Hutton (JH):** Engagement doesn't necessarily mean that you know—or can assume you know—who you’re going to meet or hear from in the consultation process.... What's physically constructed will engage other publics that weren't at the table, so you need to keep open, you need to keep a space for people and issues not necessarily at the table.

**AH:** One of the things we've done at Friends of Trinity Bellwoods is that we've tried to set up an infrastructure for the community that allows anybody to come to Friends of Trinity Bellwoods with any agenda. If they want to rotate the volleyball court nets 90 degrees, if they want new tennis court nets, if they want improvements to the ice rink, whatever it is, they can come to us, and we can try to teach them how to contact the councillor's office, how to organize a petition if they want to do something dramatic like a farmers’ market. Instead of having one group of people come up with a master plan, it allows the park to respond to interests from the community and also people from afar. It becomes a democratic space and it reflects the interests of the people who are really there. Those interests change from month to month and year to year. The more that there can be organizations like “Friends of such and such park” that can help people figure out how to make a park their own, the better. But, you know, it's all volunteer, it's very time consuming, and I don't know if it's the best way to do it.

**Richard Ubbens (RU):** In some cases your constituency is going to require that you call in an environmentalist to be involved in the design. In other cases it's going to be strictly people in the local neighbourhood. In other cases you have to recognize that it's a tourism destination and it's got to be tailored somewhat to attract tourists and investment and local businesses. If it's a brand new subdivision that doesn't have any local people yet, it comes down to basic good design principles and trying to use that space as well as you can and trying to anticipate what the future of it is. I sometimes drive around looking at some of the older parks in and around Toronto that were built in subdivisions. There's not much there other than what was there forty or fifty or sixty years ago when the subdivision was built. But now there are people who live there in the community, and that park still isn't really providing anything to that community, it's not really making the neighbourhood, and it's long overdue for making the neighbourhood. In these cases, you need to find out what the neighbourhood needs in order to actually start using the park. Some of these places are just devoid of any use.

**NS:** One of the recommendations in David Harvey's paper is to engage people in parks by using food. Rebekka: In parks that were designed with just a bit of topsoil, with no irrigation, have you any experience of working in those kinds of parks and engaging people, bringing people into parks, using food? What are the opportunities in suburban locations to go in and rethink the landscape?

**Rebekka Hutton (RH):** Evergreen has been partnering with Habitat for Humanity in Alberta. With one project we looked at the common spaces in a subdivision to create really exciting, dynamic green spaces and shared seating, and things that aren't common in a subdivision as far as plantings go. That was very successful because you had a common space that was actually geared towards the residents in the subdivision.

**NS:** In your experience, do you think agriculture in parks, gardening in parks, and food production in parks, either selling or growing, can be something that brings more, and different, people to a park, or is it usually the same people who are already there?

**RH:** In the Mount Dennis area of Toronto, there's a community garden that we started with local partners in 2006. I've watched that garden grow and flourish over the past several years; there are now more than 100 people involved in the community garden. Most of them had never set foot in Eglinton Flats before that. It's a very large park, there are paid sports facilities, there are natural areas, there are open fields. There are very dense high-rise buildings right there, but a lot of people in the neighbourhood I've spoken to have never set foot in the park because they thought it was maybe not safe. There are a lot of competing interests in the park because of the sports facilities and the natural areas, so it's a very interesting space to see really different community members engaging through the community garden.

**DL:** There's been a shift in the way we plan and design parks as a result of the evolving role they play in our society. When those subdivisions you are referring to were being planned, there was a lot of emphasis on recreation and most of the park space was devoted to that. There were things you had to have in the park to meet the standard that was developed so that every community had x, y, and z. I think there's a shift now. Parks aren't just about active recreation. They're social places, they're productive, they are places for growing food and they have a recognized ecological role to play.

**DHa:** When you're working on a park design, it's easier for the client or the city to have established standards, such as the soccer field should be “x” size and accommodate “x” teams, or whatever. But to create a dynamic social area, what kind of standards are there? Is anybody really speaking up for that in the design process?

**DL:** I think it's all part of determining, with the group, with all the stakeholders, what their needs are. And they're often not one dimensional, they're multi-layered. One size doesn't fit all.

**DM:** Speaking of trees, I do a lot of kite organizing these days. Yeah, I fly kites. I organize a big kite festival at Woodbine Beach in Toronto. And I try to find good parks in Toronto to fly kites. Kite-flying is an amaz-
ing activity, it intersects with science, and social activity, and exercise, and design, and art, and there's hardly anywhere in Toronto where you can actually fly a kite, because luckily we do have a lot of trees. You know, kite-flying was banned in a public park in Toronto last year—a $200 fine! I'm with the Toronto Kite-Fliers Association; we phoned up the councillor and had this big meeting with city staff. Kite-flying had already been banned in Scarborough Bluffs, but that community of kite-fliers just moved to a different park, so we weren't even solving the problem. My point is, if there had been a healthy association that had actually brought all the users of the park together, they could have come to a solution earlier. I think it was embarrassing for Toronto to have a sign that says “no kites allowed,” especially when there are only four or five parks in the city where you can actually fly because of all these darn trees.

RU: The kite-flying was very interesting because the string is laced with glass-shards, it’s very sharp and does damage to young children’s hands and that’s what prompted this stuff. One of the big concerns with kite-flying is always hydro lines. They’re not in any way insulated, the high voltage stuff is all there, so if your string is wet or touches two wires you can have an explosion or a fire—they're very dangerous.

DH: This really points to a common theme: the benefits of having a healthy local park group. It's in everybody’s interest to have a good group that's representative of the community, involved, engaged people looking for opportunities through the design process or through the city or through outside organizations such as Toronto Park People.

DM: It would be interesting to compare the resources that the city allocates to setting up BIAs and supporting BIAs versus the resources they allocate to parks.

RU: The constituencies of BIAs are much smaller; they're strictly those addresses along that stretch of street. I would argue that parks are much more complex and have a much more complex geography in designing parks. The other thing is that you have to design them for the future as well, not just for the fad of the moment, but for the long term.

NS: When designing parks, it’s important to be aware of those fads of the moment—those are the things that initially activate a park. I’m thinking of bread-making ovens, farmers’ markets, fire pits, all things which may not be what people are interested in ten years from now, but they do activate public spaces, immediately. It’s important to meet the community and find out what people are doing in this community right now that is bringing them together.

DH: Netami started by asking who gets to decide? It is absolutely a question of balance. At the table are people who want the bread-baking ovens and the movie nights and the guys who come and want to fly kites and kids who want to come in and have skateboard parks, and there’s also got to be a basketball court…all of them are completely valid ideas; none of them can be analyzed in isolation. We try to have a process whereby everybody comes to the same understanding, a common, a shared understanding of how the decisions are made so that decisions aren’t made in the director’s office or the designer’s office, but they’re made in an open public forum so that everybody understands why you don’t get to fly your kite or the kids can’t have a skateboard park.

NS: But even if you got everyone together, how do you decide?

DH: What I always say is, they don’t necessarily have to agree, but people have to understand how you came to that conclusion. If people have access to information, if you’re completely open and honest, if you have no hidden agendas, and you’re not making stuff up… People may not agree but at least they understand.

JH: I think this raises the question of how design contributes to a public discussion about a park. Public negotiations can be very open-ended and tend to focus on whether an element should exist or not. Public design shouldn’t be just a checklist of elements; rather it can question conventions and visualize how those elements can exist in different configurations. For example, I was involved in a project to create an orchard in Ben Nobleman Park in Toronto. As a park user, it’s easy to assume that an orchard has to be planted in the form of a grid of trees and exclude other activities and users. Part of the negotiation for the project involved showing the different forms that an orchard could take; that it could surround other activities, that it could be integrated with the children’s play area. Design can help people see public space in a completely different way.

RU: There’s more pressure in some areas because there are more people. A big part of the problem is that there is just insufficient park space. I really think that the legislation that got us five percent park space is outdated, antiquated, it needs updating. We have more density in the city now, and we need more park space.

DL: Of course, the challenge that cities have now is that they can’t afford the parks they have. There’s a funding formula that has to be sorted out for the long term. That includes both the capital budget to build and restore parks and the operating budget to maintain them.

RU: The other thing is that most municipal budget structures don’t allow for depreciation—it’s not built into the budget. In other words, you come to the end date on that facility or that asset, and it’s no longer sustainable. There isn’t necessarily enough budget built up through depreciation, like there would be in a business to replace furniture or a building from time to time. That doesn’t exist to rebuild a recreation centre or water treatment plant.

DM: When we’re talking about financial constraints, and finding other ways to fund parks, such as development fees, I think one really dangerous route is advertising. There has to be a safe place somewhere where we can actually spend time in the city without being bombarded by ads. I think parks should be one of those zero-tolerance places, along with a zone around schools and churches.

DL: Then how do you encourage private-public partnerships if you don’t acknowledge the partnership?
DM: It can be done with a plaque. Okay, I withdraw my zero tolerance...

DHa: I think the city’s been reluctant to have that conversation. I think it is time for a mature conversation, and there do need to be limits, but it’s time to have that conversation. And maybe Bryant Park in New York and Madison Park are unique examples. Maybe there’s a park or two in Toronto where that might work. You wouldn’t want that for every park, but those are very intensively used parks, they’re almost as private as a park can get and still be a public park at the same time.

RU: In terms of the advertising question, I think the neighbourhood should have a big part in it. If the local neighbourhood can accept it and wants it, well that’s going to create the funding. I think people need to be open-minded enough to say, well, are we open for business here for that kind of thing, and in a small way, in a big way, a kiosk or what have you? And if the local neighbourhood’s all for it, maybe they’re all for it. If you’ve got a local neighbourhood that loves to gather for a movie on Friday night, it could be that there’s some kind of advertising because it’s sponsored by someone. And that doesn’t necessarily have to be a permanent thing in the park, it can be part and parcel of how that movie gets shown.

JH: It is important that different parks can express different interests, but if the parks department doesn’t set some standard, then one organization allows for this massive movie screen night, and then other advertisers are going to want that, too.

DM: There’s another risk. If you set a precedent that movie nights could and should be funded by sponsors, then low-income neighbourhoods that aren’t really targeted by marketers wouldn’t end up with movie nights. Advertisers want to target parks that have users who have disposable income. The other thing is, and we could debate this for hours and we would go off topic, but it’s important to note that in the end it’s actually a scam, because all that money comes from us in the first place. Advertising budgets come from what we pay at the cash register.

DL: But to be fair, if it’s not the community’s priority to invest in the public realm, then the City has to figure out some other way to be able to do it. If we as tax payers are not willing to have our taxes increased or have priorities changed to reallocate funding to public spaces, if we’re not willing to pay for it, then there’s got to be another mechanism to ensure the long-term care of parks.

DM: That’s not true. For one hundred years we’ve paid for our own garbage cans.

DL: The public realm in the City of Toronto, and in many other cities in North America, is seriously deteriorating. Every single park needs an investment and the money is not there.

AH: In terms of coaxing hearts and minds towards actual investment of tax dollars into parks maintenance, I almost think that the public space argument doesn’t really hold a lot of sway right now for the public. What people are more interested in right now is a concept of urban nature. I think everyone is desperate for urban green space. The fact that we’re trying to bring farmland into the city, by having these farmers’ markets and gardening in our park, is evidence that people are feeling a lot of pressure of huge amounts of development. I think there’s a much greater chance of rousing public support for greater investment in parks space if you present the idea somehow through, what is the value of urban nature? We need to really have these opportunities to access nature. There could be some kind of a press campaign or educating the public—we have to value our urban nature as much as we do our hockey rinks.

DHa: We’ve talked about the challenges around corporate funding in parks, and how that is used in the U.S. in some spots, but there’s a tradition of philanthropy in public spaces in the U.S., and there isn’t that tradition here. We’ve seen a billion dollars put into cultural institutions in great buildings; could we see a day where there’s a billion dollars put into parks around the city?

DH: It’s interesting: when we talk about who gets to decide, we say the community when we’re talking about advertising. But if it’s philanthropy, the city should decide. But I was involved with a parks project in which a donor wanted to donate a million dollars to put an accessible playground in a park. I was stunned, absolutely stunned, by how difficult the process was because the community did not want, didn’t think that the city should be accepting the million dollar donation for accessible playground equipment. It seemed pretty much like a no-brainer to me. They didn’t think it was the donor’s right to be paying for the playground facility. The community thought the city should be paying for that.

DHa: But there was no consultation. The community had actually raised $100,000 in the community, and they had built new equipment, and the city was coming in and tearing that down, and putting in something else that was being targeted towards people from across the city. And it’s not a big park. It’s a very good example of a great idea that people can be opposed to, kind of like the orchard.

NS: How do we raise awareness about what kinds of things go into parks, what parks do, how they contribute to the ecology of the city? People in cities are getting really good at talking about bicycles and cars, garbage collection, and police. I think we need to cultivate the same level of informed vocabulary, the same ability to discourse on parks.

WITH THANKS TO LAUREL CHRISTIE FOR TRANSCRIBING THIS ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION.
Linda Irvine in discussion with Fung Lee about cultural research conducted for parks planning in Markham

**Fung Lee (FL):** Could you give some background on the parks research you’re involved with?

**Linda Irvine (LI):** The Town of Markham is one of Canada’s most culturally diverse and fastest growing municipalities.

The municipality has created the Markham Diversity Action Plan and it’s currently out in a draft form for community input. The title is “Everyone Welcome” and it really is a sincere desire of our Town to ensure that new and old residents feel welcome and that they belong. Based on this, Council has identified four major areas as priorities: youth, seniors, persons with disability, and newcomers. That’s not to say there aren’t other aspects of diversity, but these are the four main areas that Council has identified as focus areas. Within that, obviously, there are numerous sub-themes—access, affordability, communication, housing, navigating government, and transportation…
Based on this Diversity Action Plan, the Town is committed to working towards providing services, facilities, and programs that better serve all of its diverse communities. That’s the broad goal. The plan contains over 60 recommendations that will guide departments in figuring out how to provide services, engage with the community, and move the Diversity Action Plan forward. Whether you’re in the recreation department, are a transportation planner, or you’re working at the front counter, you are expected to look at your work and the services that you provide through the lens of the Diversity Action Plan.

Since my job is to oversee the design and development of all new parks in Markham, it is my responsibility to figure out how our design processes, and the way we look at park design, may have to change in order to respond to different cultural needs or traditions and ensure that cultural expression is an important part of park development.

FL: What kind of specific research did you do? Were there any specific parks programming or public consultation that you did in prep for this? Where did you start?

LI: Fortunately, I didn’t have to start from ground zero. Recently, the Town completed a new Integrated Leisure Master Plan. This plan is updated regularly and is a document that sets the strategic direction for culture, recreation, libraries, and parks. Essentially, this document provides a snapshot of the community and identifies certain goals and objectives that the Town needs to address, and the initiatives and actions that are necessary in the near- and long-term in order to meet these objectives. Through this study, the Town undertook considerable community
consultation and was able to identify both emerging and well-known needs within the community in these respective areas. Not surprisingly, the top recreation activity is walking for leisure. More interestingly, however, is that the second top recreation activity is social gathering and being with family in park spaces. This reflects a major shift in how our residents—largely because many are newcomers and foreign born—are using and responding to our parks and open spaces. They often come from traditions where parks are not just for active recreation but they’re really used as “outdoor living rooms”—a place to go with your family and friends to socialize and celebrate, whether you are eighty or eight months.

Survey responses from this study are an invaluable source of information that I can build on. The other aspect is that each of our park design processes involves community consultation and community meetings. Because we reach out to the community in different neighborhoods in each and every park project, we feel that we are able to keep pace with and understand the changes that are happening.

**FL:** Intimately?

LI: Yes, intimately. Residents provide input on the designs and provide valuable feedback: what they like and what they don’t like, what they want and what they don’t want. A couple of years ago we were working on a neighborhood park that was envisioned as more of a passive park, but rather than have a playground, the community, which was largely Asian, said, “Why don’t we have a pebble mosaic path?” To be honest, it wasn’t something that was even on my radar because mosaic pebble paths are a specialized art in China, Taiwan, and Japan. Pebble mosaics stimulate and massage the feet; it’s really like reflexology. You take off your shoes and you walk on the pebble path and your feet get massaged. It reduces your blood pressure, improves balance, circulation, and helps with stress and pain. Because the community asked for it, I said, “Well, this sounds like a great idea…we’ll look into it and research it. I think it’s something we can do, if it is within our budget.” The residents knew what to do when it was completed.

**FL:** They took their shoes off right away?

LI: They took their shoes off and they walked all over it. For me, this is a really significant project because it shows that the Town is prepared to really listen to its residents and demonstrates how open it is to looking for innovative ways to express cultural meaning in park design.

**FL:** Are there other projects that demonstrate the application of this new approach to park design?

LI: Right now we’re doing a community park that is more complex in nature. It has both active and passive recreation. We have brought in a Toronto firm, OpenCity
Projects, to assist us in doing more comprehensive research than simply relying on a community meeting and the input that we receive there. Their mandate is to undertake research on cultural patterns and traditions to help us create cultural connections within the park experience that will appeal to the Town’s extremely diverse population now and in the long term. Their work is the research foundation for our ultimate park design. It involves literature research and precedent study research to help us understand people’s needs and how they use outdoor space. They are looking at the changing demographics in Markham and have interviewed selected residents—individuals from India, China, Persia, and a fourth-generation Canadian. They asked residents about what they want to do in parks, their views on nature, their views on outdoor space, and what they like to do…. Because of the inclusion of this research, we have been able to bring a little more rigour to this project, as well as more defensible processes to it.

**FL:** Were there any particularly poignant items solicited from the research or interviews?

**LI:** One of the residents they interviewed said that “the park should be a place with meaning; a place that’s relevant to the community and attracts them to use it…. A place that’s for everybody that will bring the community out for a reason.” For us, this statement reinforces that we’re on the right track with our approaches and our mandate for inclusivity.

OpenCity Projects divided their findings into cultural segments: Indian, Chinese, Persian, and Canadian including native Canadian and in each of these key cultural areas, they looked at space and philosophy, health and wellness and leisure. They developed a matrix where, under each of these cultural drivers, they looked at different cultural behaviours, traditions and expressions that ultimately will find their way into the park design as appropriate.

**FL:** Can you give an excerpt from this matrix?

**LI:** For example, in China, two of the cultural drivers around wellness are feng shui and chi, which means life breath. The matrix describes the characteristics of particular cultural traditions and includes images that help us understand how these could be translated into built form.

One of the major components of this research is to better understand how various cultures organize and use outdoor space as an “outdoor living room.” Of significance is that through discussions with our residents, and this research, we are reshaping our notions and ideas around social seating, social interaction, communication, and family engagement. As well, our consultants are helping us create a design attitude—which includes principles that the park should be authentic, inclusive, progressive, and vibrant. From these principles, they are also articulating a recommended design direction and materiality for specific park features.

**FL:** Did any of the research or interviews suggest actual park designs from abroad? Or is that relevant at all because obviously we’re not going to have the same materials or types of spaces in China that we would apply here necessarily. But did they look into that kind of research at all?

**LI:** Well, our consultants picked images of public space from around the world that reflected what they heard the community saying or what was revealed in their literature research. It wasn’t about “well, here’s a park from China that we really like and now we want to replicate it here.” We really are trying to dig deeper into different social, behavioural, cultural, functional, qualitative, and experiential aspects of parks, universally.

**FL:** A person emigrating here will find it important to build community here, so, obviously, social gathering, even though it’s probably important in their original home too, is almost even more critical here because they’re trying to develop their network, their new community here, in a public space no less.

**LI:** You are absolutely correct. However, it is important to us in our pursuit of park design with a cultural basis that we not be too literal, or to reduce our design response to clichés such as “putting in a pagoda or a goldfish pond.” To me, that’s not what it’s about. It’s really fundamentally about coming up with appropriate physical responses, innovative spaces, and new design approaches that respond to cultural meaning in ways that are reflective of, and appropriate to, our context, our situation, and realities of today. I believe that if we create great cultural spaces, then regardless of your cultural background, you should be able to feel welcome and included. To do so, we must continue to look at world cultures, to find our universality as human beings, and to look at our differences, to find our common ground. And that’s the genius of the pebble path. Even though its original traditions came from Asia, everyone can appreciate it. At the end of the day, it’s about transcending individual differences to find the humanity in all of us.


**FUNG LEE, OALA, IS CO-CHAIR OF THE GROUND EDITORIAL BOARD AND A PARTNER AT PMA LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.**

WITH THANKS TO MATTHEW MILLS FOR TRANSCRIBING THIS DISCUSSION.
A round-up of selected Ontario waterfronts transformed into dynamic public spaces

compiled by Victoria Taylor and Rob Walkowski
OTTAWA

Park
Lansdowne Park - Redevelopment

Date of Completion
Construction to commence 2011

Interesting Design Features
The goal of bringing the park back to the public realm is at the heart of the design guidelines. This includes the creation of Aberdeen Way, a pedestrian-friendly streetscape that forms a defined view of Aberdeen Pavilion, a heritage centrepiece. The design for the stadium proposes to enhance both the history and the identity of the site by emphasizing its location on the Rideau Canal, resulting in a stadium in the park.

Location Details/History of Site
Lansdowne is framed by lands of local and national importance: i.e, Queen Elizabeth Drive and the Rideau Canal. The area has a long history as a city-wide gathering place and a venue for a variety of activities such as agricultural fairs, exhibition grounds and major sporting (hockey and football) and music events.

Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved
Phillips Farevaog Smollenberg
Prince Arthur’s Landing at Marina Park

**Date of Completion**
Construction began in fall 2009; anticipated completion is 2012

**Interesting Design Features**
The Master Plan proposes a mixed-use urban village of commercial and residential buildings, bike lanes, waterfront paths and gardens and open lawns, public art, and a new Arts Centre in a refurbished historical building. Year-round recreational and cultural amenities, a skating rink/splash pad, and flexible performance space are designed to reconnect the city’s downtown to the waterfront.

The local First Nations’ community was involved in the design of the Spirit Garden section of the park, which includes a bent-wood-covered gathering area, ceremonial fire pit, community gardens for medicinal herbs, and a “living shoreline” designed to enhance fish habitat in the bay.

**Location Details/History of Site**
The Park, covering 4km of shoreline on 35 acres of land, is located in the vicinity of an active 17th-century trading route, introduced to European fur traders by the early inhabitants. When the Great Lakes seaway opened, the port, known then as Port Arthur, became active in shipping and rail, sending natural resources from the interior out to eastern Canada and Europe. The Master Plan design is centred around the original CN Rail Station (c. 1844).

**Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved**
Brook McIlroy with the City of Thunder Bay

The Park, covering 4km of shoreline on 35 acres of land, is located in the vicinity of an active 17th-century trading route, introduced to European fur traders by the early inhabitants. When the Great Lakes seaway opened, the port, known then as Port Arthur, became active in shipping and rail, sending natural resources from the interior out to eastern Canada and Europe. The Master Plan design is centred around the original CN Rail Station (c. 1844).
Waterfront Parks

The waterfront master plan consists of the following parks:

- **Memorial Square (0.58 ha)**
- **Bayview Park (0.84 ha)**
- **Centennial Park (10.3 ha)**
- **Allandale Station Park (4.5 ha)**
- **Military Heritage Park (8.5 ha)**

Heritage Park is also part of the waterfront but was developed more recently and was not part of this master planning exercise.

**Date of Completion**
The project is at the master planning stage.

**Interesting Design Features**
The parks are used heavily for multi-season recreation such as ice fishing, shipwreck scuba diving, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, boating, fishing, bike/walk/run/blade trails, major festivals, etc.

**Location Details/History of Site**
This is one of the longest stretches of publicly owned waterfront in Ontario. The site has an important military heritage (i.e., the City of Barrie’s relationship with CFB Borden) and aboriginal heritage (the junction of 6-mile portage route). There is also an historic rail station at Allandale, which is being developed into a GO station.

**Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved**
The Planning Partnership

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**BARRIE**

**Parks**
The project is at the master planning stage.

**Date of Completion**
The project is at the master planning stage.

**Interesting Design Features**
The parks are used heavily for multi-season recreation such as ice fishing, shipwreck scuba diving, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, boating, fishing, bike/walk/run/blade trails, major festivals, etc.

**Location Details/History of Site**
This is one of the longest stretches of publicly owned waterfront in Ontario. The site has an important military heritage (i.e., the City of Barrie’s relationship with CFB Borden) and aboriginal heritage (the junction of 6-mile portage route). There is also an historic rail station at Allandale, which is being developed into a GO station.

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**HUNTSVILLE**

**Parks**

**River Mill Park**

**Brunel Locks**

**Date of Completion**

River Mill Park: 2009
Brunel Locks: 2010

**Interesting Design Features**
River Mill Park: Amenities in the park include a pergola surrounded by planted beds; a children’s playground that includes many fully accessible features; portable stage/bandshell for summer concerts; and a community garden. Some unique features include Muskoka chairs throughout the park, granite park furniture in the pergola area, a chess table, and native trees.

Brunel Locks: The main goal was to beautify the area.

**Location Details/History of Site**
This was one of the longest stretches of publicly owned waterfront in Ontario. The site has an important military heritage (i.e., the City of Barrie’s relationship with CFB Borden) and aboriginal heritage (the junction of 6-mile portage route). There is also an historic rail station at Allandale, which is being developed into a GO station.

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IMAGES/ Courtesy Town of Huntsville

IMAGES/ The Planning Partnership

IMAGES/ Courtesy Town of Huntsville
Waterfront Parks

SUDBURY

Park
Bell Park (97 acres)

Date of Completion
Ongoing

Interesting Design Features
An amphitheatre, two gazebos, a main beach (with lifeguard supervision in the summer), a children’s play area, and a waterfront boardwalk leading to Science North are included. A skating path (1.8 km) cleared on Ramsey Lake each winter follows the waterfront boardwalk route.

Location Details/History of Site
Bell Park is named for William J. Bell, an early lumber baron in the city. The park is part of his former estate land, donated to the City by the family in 1926.

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City of Greater Sudbury

NORTH BAY

Park
Community Waterfront Park

Date of Completion
Completion of municipal works will be fall 2011. Once municipal works are completed, the park will be fully serviced and usable to the public. This will include the development of the Civic Plaza. The Plaza will serve as the easterly entrance to the park, directly adjacent to the downtown. It will be a large "people place," with benches, a large fountain, and similar features that will attract individuals to enjoy the setting.

The park will continue to develop through the addition of new attractions such as the amphitheatre and the kids’ water park. The development of these new attractions will be the responsibility of the Community Waterfront Friends. There is no timetable in place as to when these will occur. It is anticipated that attraction development will be an ongoing endeavour that will be completed over the coming years.

Interesting Design Features
The second underpass is for the Heritage Mini-Train, which will be a small train that will encircle the entire park. A small line is currently in operation on the waterfront as an attraction. It has proven very popular, both with locals and with tourists. Once it is extended throughout the park, it will serve as both a ride/attraction for children as well as a mode of transportation for children and individuals with mobility limitations.

As part of the land purchase, the City of North Bay acquired the former CP Rail station. This property is a designated heritage site. The City has retrofitted this building to become the new North Bay and District Museum. The redesigned museum has preserved the heritage characteristics that make it unique while adapting the use to something relevant to the community’s needs.

Location Details/History of Site
The City’s 1928 Official Plan proposed a physical access between the downtown and waterfront areas, overcoming the existing CP Rail separation. The Community Waterfront Plan includes two underpasses that travel under the CP Rail line to create the physical connection between the waterfront and the downtown. The underpass is considered one of the most important attributes to the CWP, becoming a catalyst for new businesses including Marina Point, a $16M retirement community that employs 80 people.

As a former rail property, there were considerable remedial measures that would be required prior to any redevelopment. The CWP concept has been recognized for being a leading example of the adaptive reuse of a brownfield site and in 2010 received the Excellence in Project Development at the Neighbourhood Scale from the Canadian Urban Institute.

Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved
Schollen & Company Inc. produced the drawings.

Images/ Courtesy City of Greater Sudbury

Images/ Schollen & Company Inc.
LONDON

Park
Forks of the Thames, Ivey Park

Date of Completion
Given the complexity of the many park features, construction occurred in three main phases starting in 2001 and wrapping up in 2006.

Interesting Design Features
Over 25 years, Ivey Park has been transformed from derelict industrial uses and scattered homes to a vibrant urban park linking the downtown to the river. A road was closed for the project and a heritage home was acquired and transformed into a museum that highlights the rich history of the site. The Walter Blackburn Memorial Fountain uses river water to cascade six arcing jets of water from the opposite river bank. A seventh 100mm jet shoots more than 30m into the air every 15 minutes.

Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved
Ivey Park Civic Plaza and Splash Pad: PMA Landscape Architects with Vafiades Landscape Architect

Location Details/History of Site
London began at the forks of the river, where a settlement grew and prospered. The site and river were originally used for sustenance, but gradually, commercial and recreational uses expanded. The Forks area comprises several parks along the river that support major summer events, the oldest ball diamond in North America, natural flood plains, London’s Art Gallery and Museum, the Children’s Museum, seniors centre, and neighbourhood uses. Along the Thames, there is more than 2000 ha of parkland and natural areas and a 50km pathway system that links all corners of the city.

Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved
Brad Johnson & Associates

PORT HOPE

Parks
Farini Gardens – Kin Park
Rotary Park
Riverside Park

Date of Completion
December 1, 2010

Interesting Design Features
The goal is to strengthen the linkage between the downtown and the waterfront.

Location Details/History of Site
The brick columns with steel I-beam seating areas are symbolic of Port Hope’s industrial heritage.

Lead Landscape Architect Firm, Designer, Technician Involved
Ivey Park Civic Plaza and Splash Pad: PMA Landscape Architects with Vafiades Landscape Architect

Bottom text:

IMAGES/ Courtesy City of London
IMAGES/ Courtesy Town of Port Hope

BIOS/ VICTORIA TAYLOR AND ROB WALKOWIAK ARE BOTH MEMBERS OF THE GROUND EDITORIAL BOARD.
Involving the Public

Donna Hinde (DH): I think that people have the right and responsibility to be involved in the planning and design processes for their parks. Landscape architects and other design professionals who practise in the public realm have not done a great job in the past of involving the public in ways by which they can make meaningful contributions to their projects. I’ve sworn that I will never do another town hall meeting or an open house again because we learned the hard way that they are not useful methods. They end up being a huge waste of time for the client. We’ve worked really hard in our office—and I help colleagues in other firms, as well—to design a process that allows residents and other stakeholders to be involved in each stage of decision making. We never go very far without talking to the community. We try to review work-in-progress before it’s been finalized and we think very carefully about the best methods of sharing information. I’ve found the most productive forums for participation to be grounded in conversations, not presentations.

Nancy Chater (NC): What happens at these town hall meetings that makes them unproductive?

DH: Assuming that the project is a bit clouded in controversy, I think people are often angry when they come. Many automatic responses are, “nobody talked to me,” “why am I hearing about it so late,” “I didn’t know that there was a meeting.”

NC: If people feel excluded, right from the start, they get their backs up, and want to air grievances.

DH: Right. And at a town hall meeting, the consultant is proudly presenting the work they’ve done, yet that kind of presentation with question-and-answer format is not a collaborative way to engage people. Similarly, I find that with an open house, where again
designs are proudly displayed, the problem is that it’s been too far developed. And often the way we talk about things is practically impenetrable for the average person. We are now becoming more inventive in the way that we engage the public. There are helpful tools, such as physical or digital models, animations, precedent images of similar landscapes, cut outs or templates of facilities, that are all useful to get people to collage ideas together. We will also have people diagram with the aid of a designer to try to illustrate ideas. It’s absolutely a tenet of our approach that a designer is holding the pen and is guiding the process. Members of the public sometimes feel a bit easier, though, about contributing if they too are scribbling along with the people on the design team.

NC: It sounds as if smaller groups are important, not a big room with a single speaker, but interactive, smaller groups participating in a hands-on way.

DH: Yes, and the number of participants doesn’t matter. It’s all about creating smaller conversations within that larger forum. Typically people are comfortable talking in a group of six to ten people, so there are often multiple conversations happening at an event. I think success in public participation depends on the venue, the props that you use to engage people, and the questions you ask them. It’s a simple formula. I have learned to purposely construct any question I ask in a positive way. That simple act has real repercussions on the input.

NC: Could you give me an example of a positive approach?

DH: I never ask what people don’t like about a place because I find you will learn that through conversation anyway. You have to start with what’s working really well and then build on that. So I ask “what do you love about the place, what do you love about your community, what are the three things that work best about this space?” Even when you ask a positive question, people will say, “the City does not pick up garbage enough, there is too much traffic.” So I say again, “now tell me the three things you really love.” It takes a bit of work but it’s amazing that they will switch and think about what really does work best in their community or park or whatever the topic happens to be.

NC: How do you balance the leadership role of the designer with the problems associated with “design by committee”? 

DH: This is where designers often fail in creating a process to get the input they need. You have to ask the right questions. I absolutely disagree with design by committee. You have to let the designers design. I’ve learned this working with our firm and other firms where I’m not acting as a designer. I am acting as the person figuring out how to get the landscape architects the information they need to design. In those kinds of forums, you ask targeted questions about the plan that will enable decisions to be made. Those questions are hard to anticipate until you understand the issues and concerns on the part of the residents and see the design and understand what the designers need input on to move forward. It’s not a process of saying, “tell me all the things you want to see in the park.” You have to be careful not to ask those kinds of questions because you create unrealistic expectations.

NC: What about the dynamic of meetings where one or two people, who happen to have strong views, tend to dominate?

DH: If there are 60 people, there are 60 opinions, and you want to let everybody talk and share 60 opinions. I have had some situations where people push back, saying, “no I don’t want to go into small groups; I want to share my views with everybody.” I will often say to those people that they are welcome to talk to me, and if others want to hear they can sit and listen to you, but otherwise please join a table and start the small group discussions. You know, 99 percent of the people will go into groups because they want to share their opinions too. The challenge is designing the format of the meeting so that you don’t expose yourself to that kind of situation and waste everybody’s time. We also try to construct the conversations so that you don’t necessarily have to have somebody facilitating the conversation in small groups, such as a landscape architect, an architect, planner or an urban designer. I think it’s even more interesting when there is not one of us leading the conversation in a particular way. We have to be really thoughtful about the props that are on the table, the plans or drawings we are using, and about asking the right questions so that people can have a conversation among themselves.

NC: It leads to them feeling empowered.

DH: Yes, it’s about people taking charge. I find that people are very bright and more than capable of understanding the questions and what is expected of them. We are there to make sure that the process doesn’t get stuck.

NC: Do you sometimes have trouble getting people to participate in the process or do you typically have well-attended meetings?

DH: I think that was the situation maybe ten years ago. I find that now, overwhelmingly, it’s the other way around. People really feel a right and responsibility to be involved. They may be intimidated. Or there may be language barriers. For example, our firm is currently designing a new Central Park in Regent Park. There it takes a whole other set of skills because in those public consultation events there are interpreters for sometimes ten different languages. While there’s a presentation, there’s chatter in many different languages simultaneously due to the interpreting. In those situations, it’s impossible to have people writing on a flip chart, or writing notes on a plan, because English is typically not their first language, so we tend to use a lot of imagery modeling and cut outs where people can collage images they think are representative of the kind of park they would like to see. For us the challenge is trying to understand the needs and desires as well as the
NC: Do you find that people really love their parks, in terms of the growth of participation you have seen in the past 10 years?

DH: Yes, there is a real sense of ownership of their spaces, as there should be. In Toronto, parks are absolutely the focus of the neighbourhoods, and so I am never critical about the passion that people bring to the table. We've been involved in lots of projects where it's been tough to try and unravel the issues, to get all the competing demands to be more balanced, and get everybody talking calmly and respectfully to each other.

NC: What would be some of the typical hot button issues?

DH: We are doing a waterfront project right now in Yellowknife, and it's really interesting because it's the same issues as most waterfronts: a concern about more public access to the water's edge, clearer public access to public property, development that is compatible with public space. These are common concerns.

We did some work with PMA on Neshama Park in North Toronto and in that case it was a park that was to be redesigned with play equipment that would be universally accessible for children, and it was being funded partly through private donation. The two main issues there were interesting. Many residents were not comfortable with the fact that private money was being spent on a public park. The other issue was that playground equipment was being changed to enable children of all abilities to play. Through this kind of initiative, we hoped it would encourage a broader understanding, and acceptance, of the capabilities of all children. It was very interesting to work with groups that represented both specialized children's abilities and able-bodied children, as park users.

NC: Were you able to come to a consensus?

DH: Yes. There were 200 residents at the first workshop and 15 residents at the fourth workshop. PMA Landscape Architects is guiding the park through construction now, so that is a good sign of success. It may be too idealistic to think that everyone agrees with the final plan, but participants in the workshops are given the opportunity to understand how decisions were made through the design process. I think residents were very frustrated by an original design that went too far before they had input. Residents continue to be very involved with PMA during construction.

NC: How early on should a plan be presented?

DH: I have three benchmarks for public input during the design process. The first is a consultation event to get a common understanding of existing conditions, opportunities for change, and the fundamental principles of the design. Let's all understand first what's working really well about this place, and what are the biggest opportunities for change before plans are prepared. The second benchmark is to get a common understanding of the options. The third benchmark is to get a common understanding of the preferred plan. I find that I usually get involved in projects because the client and the team have gone right to the third stage decision-making benchmark of the plan without involving people in the earlier stages. It's a relatively easy thing for us all to change the way we involve people by involving them in those three steps.

NC: With a staged process of consultation do you find that you have the same people staying with the process or do you get new people at each meeting? Does that matter?

DH: The easiest process is when the people that came to the first meeting come to the second one. The more difficult process is when people come to the second meeting and say they don't know anything about it. You have to be ready to take those people through the first step, but not with all the participants, so there's a work table where you take anybody who's not up to speed. This has become easier with things being posted on websites.

NC: Another challenge you have identified is long-term maintenance and management of urban parks. You mentioned for example that all the waterfront projects in Toronto are being built yet there is no new management system in place.

DH: It's really very frightening that there are a lot of waterfront parks coming online and the City has no expanded capacity to take care of the parks. Sugar Beach, Sherbourne Park, and HTO are gaining world-wide recognition. We are finding that the City is stripped to the bone and there is no money for maintenance. There is no budget for horticultural maintenance, for weeding, proper mowing, or watering. And there's pressure to do maintenance quickly, with flying crews that dash in and out, so things happen like naturalized landscapes get mowed because it's the easiest way to maintain it.

I'm very fearful that the situation is not going to get better with the new political regime in Toronto. The interesting next stage will be whether or not more residents' groups take a more active role in the management of their parks. If that is the way of the future, I wonder if it may lead to people outside the neighbourhood not feeling as welcome if parks become the purview of the local neighbourhood. It's certainly the model in many American cities in that the residents' groups or associations of various types take over.

NC: Right, like a conservancy—a new model for Toronto. Do you think that it's viable to have neighbourhood stewardship, in terms of consistency, reliability, knowing what to do?

DH: I think that is a viable solution. Neighbourhood groups do have to become more involved. It's not unlike some of the BIAs where the BIAs are taking over construction and maintenance and management of their landscapes and streetscapes, such as the Yorkville BIA and the Bloor Street project in Toronto.

NC: It's complicated, though, by issues related to unions. You run up against pitting volunteers against unionized City workers, and the City workers are understandably not thrilled to have their work
being done for free, while at the same time they recognize that they don't have the person-power or the budget.

I wonder if a solution would be for neighbourhood groups to get into political advocacy, to push the local governing bodies to increase the budget or allocate more money?

**DH:** They can try, but they are going to be told that the pie is only so big.

**NC:** Is there an opportunity to put in a budget line item for maintenance costs, especially for the first couple of years, right up front within the overall cost of the park?

**DH:** That's a very interesting idea. Here's a relevant analogy: in greenfields, what happens is that the developer typically pays for the capital costs of the park construction up front in an emerging neighbourhood, and he or she will get paid back that capital cost over time by the municipality as the neighbourhood starts to get built out. The point is, I want to make it is that the developer also commits to maintaining that park—to address your point—for the first three years and then turns it over to the municipality. They do it because they want to make sure that the park looks great, so they can sell more new homes, but it's an interesting model. There is something in that model to learn for downtown parks—building in a maintenance budget that is carried in the capital cost.

**NC:** It seems that the thinking behind the design and planning for new parks is ahead of the systems in place to support them. We are taking a new direction by building the parks first, and then building the neighbourhoods around them because they become a catalyst for community development and also increase property values if they are done well. That's very forward thinking, but it seems other departments in the City have not caught up.

While there is a great vision of what the parks can do for the new neighbourhoods, with Waterfront Toronto locating these parks as central to community development, the vision is ahead of the curve. The City is on. Yet there are various newer models, such as public private partnerships, such as developers having to maintain the park for the first few years to get it up and running, and then maybe community stewardship kicks in after that. Another phase of maintenance might be established after that.

**DH:** The question is: How can landscape architects facilitate that enhanced awareness and the ensuing conversation at the municipal level and how can they help realize the opportunity to come in and help neighbourhoods improve their park, and give them the tools they need to do that?

**NC:** This may be more of a suburban situation, but when people get street trees planted on their road allowance land in front, they get information about watering the street tree. Maybe we need more private donors for public parks?

**DH:** People go crazy about that. Going back to my example of Neshama Park, some residents were really frightened that the private sector was paying for most of the work.

**NC:** What about the foundation model? Toronto could go with the American foundation model. Donors give to the foundation, the foundation is administered by the City, and so it is publicly controlled.

Another challenge you identified was the heavy influence of the demands of the municipal recreation program for active sports fields in park design. Sports groups have very strong influence in most communities.

**DH:** I think we’re becoming a little better at balancing the demands of active sports with the demands of the people who want passive places. We are finding that because there is such an inadequate supply of sports fields, especially in the built-up areas of the city, the recreation departments are understandably anxious to build more baseball diamonds and soccer fields or some other sports facilities in parks. This pushes out the other users because they aren’t represented by an association like the sports teams are. Again the conversations that we have with all the representatives of the client—in order to get everybody to understand the competing demands on the park—are important. If people understand the challenges of design, if you take those challenges out of your office and into those working sessions, and you engage those representatives to help you solve the problem—don’t just tell me what the problem is, help me solve the problem—a different level of understanding is created about the limits and capacity of the space.

We find this challenge particularly in emerging neighbourhoods when we are trying to create a green space that has a more urban character. The municipality has an eye on that green space for football fields, or soccer fields, whereas our intention is to create a park with a more urban character. I think its changing, slowly, and everybody is gradually gaining a renewed understanding of how that green space has to function. It’s about balancing a wide spectrum of needs and not just specific sports interests.

I think that we’ve got some great models of new urban parks in Toronto. The City is interested in a more balanced approach to design now. For example, Central Park in Regent Park has a large open green where all kinds of sports can be played and community events can happen. It isn’t necessarily dedicated to one sport, but it can easily morph into a soccer field, or a place you can throw a baseball around, or you host a community event, a movie night, or whatever. This is important, because of the broad, culturally diverse neighbourhoods we have; that is, the people who live in the neighbourhoods don’t necessarily play baseball and football.

As designers, we have to be really good listeners to figure out how communities want to use their parks.

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**BIOS/ DONNA HINDE, OALA, FCSLA, HAS BEEN A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IN PRIVATE PRACTICE FOR 25 YEARS. SHE HAS MANAGED COMPLEX PROJECTS INVOLVING A MYRIAD OF STAKEHOLDERS IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT ONTARIO, AS WELL AS IN HOUSTON, CLEVELAND, AND, CURRENTLY, IN YELLOWKNIFE.**

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**WITH THANKS TO SHANNON BAKER FOR TRANSCRIBING THIS DISCUSSION.**
The winning entry for the international Downsview Park competition was announced in May of 2000—Tree City, by Rem Koolhaas/OMA with Bruce Mau Design. It was an exciting concept proposing a formula whereby trees rather than buildings would serve to catalyze low-density metropolitan life. It has been more than ten years since the competition, and only recently has there been significant action in and on the ground. In an attempt to summarize what has accounted for all that time, I interviewed the key designers currently involved, in order to discern the challenges of transforming the award-winning concept into a built landscape.

The Government of Canada announced the closure of the Canadian Forces Base Toronto in 1994 and the government’s intention to create a national urban park on the Downsview lands. In 1995, an operating subsidiary of the Canada Lands Company Limited held authority as manager of the Downsview property. Officially named Parc Downsview Park Incorporated (PDP) in 1999, the federal government appointed a Board of Directors to set broad policies and strategic direction for the park. In 2003, PDP was transformed into a Crown Corporation, with the requirement that the corporation submit annual reports to the Minister of Transport for tabling in Parliament. Thus, although the park could begin its operations, no serious site modifications could be effected until July 2006, when the full transfer of administrative and effective control and ownership for all 231.5 hectares (572 acres) of land took place.

Sensing the governmental red tape surrounding land authority and transfer, Rem Koolhaas/OMA departed the Tree City team in 2001, conveying team leadership to Bruce Mau Design. With the now independent agent, known as Parc Downsview Park, finally organized as park authority in 2003, there was a sense that the park could move forward. PDP asked new team leader Bruce Mau to reconfigure the Tree City team to include a broader set of local consultants, including landscape architects. The new Toronto-centric team included original members Oleson Worland Architects and horticulturalist Horst Dickert, and was joined by PMA Landscape Architects and SNC-Lavalin Engineers. The team was directed to develop the winning competition scheme into a Preliminary Master Plan.

Concurrently, David Anselmi, a landscape architect, was hired as Vice President of Parc Downsview Park, where his role was to oversee the transformation of the theoretical Tree City proposal into an implementable product. According to Anselmi, he spent most of his initial years “on the management side, briefing the right people, so that they were up to speed on where the project stood before we owned the land and after we owned the land,” and on “budget control and cost estimating, and working with Ottawa to get a corporate plan approved on a regular basis.” Anselmi was also in charge of operations, which is now overseen by its own department but at the time included the maintenance of 1.7 million square feet of buildings plus the 231.5 hectares of parkland. From the beginning, Anselmi’s role has been to ensure Parc Downsview Park is self-financing and that the park gets built. Thus, while primarily overseeing design development by finding the right people to complete the various projects, he has to ensure that the books stay balanced to pay for the park.
Economic Imperatives

The key issue—that of Downsview Park not using a single dollar from taxpayers—has been a crucial factor in the slow rate of park development. It is also what effectively caused the single visionary Parc Downsview Park scheme to be fractured into several pieces, designed by many. Because PDP receives authorities every year from Ottawa, the corporation cannot contract for more than its authorities. Therefore, due to the long duration of park building, it has not been possible to continue with a single overseeing consultant from the original Tree City team. On the one hand, breaking down the large design challenges of the site into smaller pieces is a logical strategy and not uncommon for large-scale landscape projects. On the other hand, design integrity, the overall legibility of an internationally significant park as guided by one lead designer, may later.

PDP currently makes a little money on short-term rental leases, rental, and some events. In the long term, however, it will be the sale of real estate that pays for the park. Bill Bryck recently joined PDP as President and CEO. With thirty years of experience in the private sector, in real estate, he is already positively directing the focus toward park implementation to encourage neighbourhood development. Real estate consultants such as Deloitte and Touche, Barry Lyons, and The Altus Group have all done evaluations to guide raw value, serviced value, and to determine whether or not PDP is proposing the right neighbourhood development product from a market perspective. The design intent and zoning of the neighbourhoods will be sold to developers, and a purchase sale agreement will ensure that they comply with the proposed vision. PDP will also exert control by staying involved in the process with the ultimate owner, and will make money through an annuity relationship with long-term land lease with perpetual income, which will fund park maintenance and operation.

The Design Process

In 2003 Bruce Mau’s team articulated the design vision in a publication called “Downsview Idea Book,” subtitled “Tree City, Preliminary Master Plan, Parc Downsview Park.” Accompanied by an exhibition, with paintings by Toronto artists, the book was intended to reinstate interest in the project’s potential. Mau’s approach was to charrette with the team, and his entire office, on every imaginable park program and to organize both the team and the park itself into three thematic zones. The Action Zone, the Promenade Zone, and the Cultivation Campus Zone were loosely set around the document’s final diagram of high-value elements as determined from an inventory of the site’s inherent features. The programs in the zones took the form of circles of all sizes, and thus the master plan for Downsview Park’s form was set. A further refinement of the Idea Book became the “Parc Downsview Park Master Plan and Development Guidelines” in February of 2004. The two-dimensional plan graphic of these documents could now be identified as objects with activities, allowing for preliminary cost estimation and early marketing, but the framework strategy of how to evolve a park was still unclear.

To help resolve this, a PDP Peer Review Committee was formed in 2004 with planners, architects, landscape architects, and engineers to review the preliminary master plan. The committee confirmed that the park concept was contemporary and valid, but it also indicated that PDP needed technical site data and an understanding of the engineering issues in order to move the design forward. At this preliminary master plan moment, four years after the competition announcement and prior to any additional consulting, PDP was anxious to move some dirt. At the suggestion of the Review Committee, the planned forest, between the Action and Promenade Zones, seemed the most logical place to start. The basic location of the forest was set around an historic grove of trees, and there was team knowledge of how the soil would need to be amended. In addition, the local community was exerting increasing pressure to see something at Downsview, so, in 2004, PDP started with some big infrastructure removals. PDP also, through the design work of PMA Landscape Architects, began developing planting plans, specifications, and then tendering the grading, soil preparation, and planting of the Forest. According to Anselmi, “So, in fact, before we owned the land in 2006, we said, if we’re going to get a wrist slap for anything, let it be for planting trees!” To date, more than 60,000 trees have been planted in the park.

Although many trees had to be relocated to accommodate excavation for the lake, this critical design implementation, enlarged by the event of planting, catalyzed the foundational landscape pieces to follow.

With further technical underpinning through additional engineers and technicians, the next iteration of the “Parc Downsview Park Comprehensive Park Plan” was submitted three years later, in January of 2007, providing what is now considered the document that guides park development. At this stage, the core Tree City team consisted of Bruce Mau Design, PMA Landscape Architects, and SNC-Lavalin engineers, with PDP separately but simultaneously consulting with Dougan and Associates for ecology, Dillon Consulting on infrastructure, Marshall Macklin Monaghan on transportation issues, Milestone Strategy Management Consultants on recreation, and SNC-Lavalin on additional engineering specifics related to hydrology and geotechnical issues. PDP also engaged Brook McIlroy for consulting on urban development guidelines, resulting in a complementary document alongside the final master plan, entitled “Sustainable Community Development Guidelines,” which was completed at the end of 2007.
Brook McIlroy’s document places the park as the central driver for surrounding community development, as exactly iterated by the Comprehensive Park Plan, to inform the specific design intents for each of the neighbourhood development blocks. This last document, and its ability to entice and direct successful development, is ultimately what will pay for the park to be built and maintained.

In the meantime, the park has essentially been a construction site. Anselmi acknowledges that it has been a challenge to keep the park open and garner interest through programs and events while the park is under construction and evolving. “We’re our own worst enemy of course because we’ve had a successful program of events and that requires land, which has caused us to delay some construction.” Anselmi goes on to say, “You run a real risk of sending the wrong message [i.e.] 25,000 people come for a concert. How many of those people walk away saying ‘the park wasn’t that great,’ because it wasn’t built yet!” While events help trigger buzz about the park, they don’t necessarily tell the right story about the park’s future direction. As Anselmi reflects, “I think the bigger issue is, quite frankly, we’ve learned to fly under the radar a little bit. But I think it’s also gotten us to a point where we’re used to not being too loud and proud about what we’re doing.” He goes on to say, “We’ve done lots, but not the kind of [things] that people can photograph, or can recognize, or can talk about. And it’s cost us 5 million bucks, and two years, and lots of hard work.” From Anselmi’s perspective, “it’s tough to play the long game, but far more rewarding.”

**Serious Earth Moving**

The design development for the first major earth-moving project started in 2007 with the work of the MMM Group, under the management of landscape architect Ian Gray. His role has been to implement the large central Promenade section of the master plan, which includes a lake, mounds, and meadow. MMM Group has also spent time analyzing the park design in terms of review and implementation risk, which has led to an informal role of ongoing discussions with Anselmi about the park’s dynamic design intentions, and quantifying continued design development while pieces of the park are being constructed. From Gray’s perspective, “One of the challenges of the [master plan] design is that it made some tentative forays into three dimensions. But, to a larger extent, the way the design was communicated was heavily weighted towards two dimensions. So, one of our challenges has been to interpret both the design intent and the master plan in terms of three dimensions.” For instance, when the excavation work began for the lake, it became clear that the master plan had not fully resolved the unimaginable volumes of fill. For engineering and cost reasons, the proposed shape of the lake had to be changed. MMM Group designed a series of additional mounds to complement the singular massive mound of the master plan.

In 2009, Janet Rosenberg and Associates was awarded the contract to design a set of entry gates for the park. Construction on the gates will begin in the spring of 2012. Strategically placed at different locations, the gates are intended to provide the park with an identity on the street and to invite people in. According to Janet Rosenberg, “Tree City never really worked with the edges, [and] there has been a level of change since the original design competition. I think the emphasis [of the original park scheme] was more on the inside, rather than on the outside.”

In May of 2010, Dillon Consulting was contracted to work on the major path system designated in the master plan as the Circuit Path. Led by Ian Dance and Li Wang, details of the trails, materials, and slopes are being designed to incorporate the present and future elements of the site. Dance and Wang have been working with JRA to ensure that their pathways connect to the gates. Construction on the Circuit Path will start in the spring of 2011, and the designers have already discovered a few opportunities onsite to gain picturesque views to the lake by raising elevations. As Dance sees it, “There will always be changes in the evolution of a master plan to the realization of a physical park. During the development of a project…challenges that were overlooked in the master plan (will need to be addressed), because this stage of the project brings out the details of the site.” Li Wang notes that “If people compare the original [competition] diagram with the final master plan, they may not see the similarity. But I think the spirit is there, it’s just the language and the graphic [that] are different. No one can stamp those circles on the ground. Conceptually, it works well, it’s a powerful design. But once you bring it into reality, you have to get the essence of it and then you deliver from more practical language.”

**Design Evolution**

Since the original designers of the concept and vision for the park were not retained, and the team that refined the master plan has not been contracted to carry the design through to construction or for consultation, there is potential for the variously doled out landscape contracts to form a piecemeal design. However, all of the abovementioned landscape architects have demonstrated their understanding of the bigger conceptual spirit, and feel confident that PDP VP David Anselmi, especially with his expertise as a landscape architect, provides the consistency and leadership that upholds it. Even though Anselmi himself worries that the park is being built in pieces, he views that as necessitated by the park’s financial operation.

It remains PDP’s job to move from a two-dimensional iconic plan graphic into a three-dimensional landscape, with many details to resolve along the way, and about 80 million dollars worth of contracts and construction to complete. At the same time, PDP is still mowing 200 acres of grass, maintaining buildings, and planning events, which is a huge draw on staff and on a project with a very small operating budget. The goal is to have all the big pieces more or less done by 2012, allowing the park to be significantly opened to the public, so that in the following four years the finishing pieces, such as pavilions, plazas, and fountains, can be put in place.

Ten years later, the icon has managed to make it into the ground, and a new version of a larger park at Downsview is taking shape. However, we will have to wait at least another ten years to see if the master plan, built as Park Downsview Park, will put the park back into international acclaim.

**BIO**

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ALISSA THANKS ALL THE INTERVIEWEES, AND DANIELS STUDENTS PEGGY PEB-CHI CHI FOR ASSISTANCE IN CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND KIANA KEYVANI AND STACIE DROST (FOR TIMELINE RESEARCH).
Downsview Land Use

- **WISCONSIN GLACIATION** (100000-9000 BC)
- **WILD WOODLANDS** (CIRCA 9000 BC-1800)
- **ABORIGINAL TERRITORY** (CIRCA 9000 BC-CIRCA LATE 1700S)
- **AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF CROPS, PASTURE, ORCHARD, WOODLANDS, AND GARDENS** (CIRCA 1825-1940)
- **PLANK ROADS AT GORE AND VAUGHAN (DUFFERIN)** (1850-1891)
- **TOLL GATES AT WILSON AND SHEPPARD AVENUE** (1850-1891)
- **NORTHERN RAILWAY CUTS ACROSS SITE HAULS GRAIN, FEED, LIVESTOCK, AND LUMBER** (1853-PRESENT)
- **JOSEPH MOWATT LISTED FARMER FOR LOT 13** (1902-1912)
- **F.J. WICKS APPEARS AS TENANT FOR LOT 13** (1922)
- **DEHAVILLAND AIRCRAFT OF CANADA CONSTRUCTS 18 BUILDINGS ON SITE** (1928-1944)
- **DEHAVILLAND EXPANDS RUNWAY AND MANUFACTURING FACILITIES** (1939-1945)
- **BUILDING 42 FOR WOODWORKING SHOP CONSTRUCTED BY DEHAVILLAND** (1943)
- **DEHAVILLAND BUILDS BUILDING 40 AND A NISSENHUT FOR STORAGE** (1944)
- **"BEAVER" BUSH WORK MONOPLANES PRODUCED AT DOWNSVIEW** (1947-1968)
- **AIRFORCE SQUADRON REFORMS AS A PEACETIME RESERVE AT DOWNSVIEW** (1950-1996)
- **DEHAVILLAND BUILDS MODERN FACTORY** (1954)
- **POPE JOHN PAUL II VISIT** (1984)
- **POPE JOHN PAUL II VISITS AS PART OF WORLD YOUTH DAY; 850,000 PILGRIMS** (2002)
- **MOLSON CANADIAN ROCKS FOR TORONTO SARSTOCK CONCERT; 400,000 ATTEND** (2003)
- **DOWNVIEW SITE EXCAVATED BY UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO STUDENTS** (CIRCA 1950)
- **FIRST EDGEFEST AT DOWNSVIEW SITE** (2008)
- **COMPETITION WINNER—TREE CITY—ANNOUNCED** (2000)
- **STANLEY GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD RFP ANNOUNCED** (2009)
- **SOLAR PANEL DESIGN, INSTALLATION, AND OPERATION** (2010)
- **CONSTRUCTION OF SPORTS CENTRE FIELDS AND PARK'S FIRST LEED SILVER PAVILLION** (2010)
- **MAJOR PARK AREA SCHEDULED TO BE RE-OPENED TO THE PUBLIC** (JUL. 2012)

**TIMELINE BY ALISSA NORTH, OALA**

**SOURCES:**
- EVERGREEN. WWW.EVERGREEN.CA.
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- MCLEOD, KATHRYN. "FROM TOPOGRAPHY TO TECHNOLOGY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATION OF DOWNSVIEW PARK'S HERITAGE." MASTERS THESIS, TRENT UNIVERSITY, 2009.
- PARC DOWNSVIEW PARK INC. WWW.DOWNSVIEWPARK.CA/ENG/INDEX.SHTML
- THE HISTORY & HERITAGE OF THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE. WWW.RCAF.COM.
Notes: A Miscellany of News and Events

01/ Events and programs in parks can harm or stress vegetation and infrastructure.

IMAGE/ Courtesy: National Capital Commission

02/ Lebreton Flats in Ottawa has been designed to accommodate large-scale events.

IMAGE/ Courtesy: National Capital Commission

The National Capital Commission (NCC) has a dual role in relation to Capital parks. Responsible for preserving all green space, parks, and public space under its jurisdiction, NCC also has a mandate to organize, sponsor, and promote public activities and events in the National Capital Region in a way that enriches the cultural and social fabric of Canada.

It is interesting to note the apparent contradiction between the responsibility to promote the Capital and, in parallel, to conserve the Capital’s ecosystems and green spaces.

Large- and even small-scale events such as concerts and festivals can damage park vegetation and infrastructure. Immediate damages can be repaired quickly; long-term cumulative impacts such as soil compaction and loss of trees are less obvious, difficult to assess, and might be impossible to reinstate.

The NCC is currently undertaking a study of the carrying capacity of its Capital parks. The goal of the study is to develop best management practices for events and maintenance guidelines for the parks in order to minimize long-term impacts of events on parks. Along with well-known preventive measures such as temporary protective fencing along drip lines of trees, other design solutions are being studied, such as the introduction of wider pathways to accommodate equipment delivery vehicles, provision of large open spaces to accommodate crowds, integration of underground site services (electricity, water) and event servicing in predetermined areas of the park, and use of soil compaction prevention technologies. Permanent hard-surface plazas are being implemented in selected parks to serve multiple purposes, such as a stage or gathering areas. The most important management factor, however, is defining site carrying capacity—that is, the amount of recreational or other activity a park can sustain without degrading its environment. This, expressed in maximum number of visitors per year, can be used as a baseline for programming site activities. Coordinated management of events is another tool that helps to minimize the installation and dismantling period—if, for example, two or more events with similar needs can be grouped. A period of rest between events may help as well to lower overall stress on vegetation.

The multifunctional role of parks presents an ongoing challenge in terms of their design and management. Capital parks and programs will coexist. The challenge is how to design the parks to accommodate events. What is the right balance? This is the question that the Urban Parks Capacity Study attempts to answer.

TEXT BY DOROTA GRUDNIEWSZCZ, OALA, WHO WORKS FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION IN THE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DIVISION.

Toronto Park People is hosting a summit on April 16, 2011, from 2pm to 5:30pm, at the Brick Works in Toronto. The summit will be a historic, first-ever gathering of park advocates from across Toronto. The keynote speaker is Tupper Thomas, the founder and president of the Prospect Park Alliance. For details and registration, visit www.parkpeople.ca.

OALA is pleased to announce that Ground’s regular Round Table feature in the magazine is going public. OALA is hosting a public forum based on the theme of this issue’s Round Table—Whose Park Is It? The open forum will feature speakers from the Round Table and will be held on April 7, 2011, from 6pm to 8pm, at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design at the University of Toronto. See www.oala.ca for more details.
The 2011 Living Architecture Regional Symposium will be held in Washington, D.C., from April 11-12, 2011. The symposium will highlight best practices associated with the design, installation, and maintenance of green roofs and walls. To register, visit www.greenroofs.org.

An upcoming two-day conference in Toronto, "Soils and Urban Trees," features internationally renowned speakers such as William Bryant Logan, James Urban, and Paul Stamets. These and other experts will introduce concepts of ideal soil structure and biology, and explore how a new breed of arborists is growing healthy trees and preserving mature trees by looking at the roots of tree care. The conference will be held at the Toronto Botanical Garden from April 26-27, 2011. For information, phone (905) 274-1022 or email info@ufis.ca.

A recently formed coalition of six Ontario-based environmental groups is working to put green infrastructure on the provincial agenda. According to coordinator Colleen Cirillo of the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition, "we want to show policy makers how green infrastructure complements and extends the life of grey infrastructure and to broaden the definition of infrastructure to include green infrastructure." One of the coalition’s first plans is to commission a study that puts a dollar figure on the value of the ecological goods and services provided by green infrastructure in Ontario, such as green roofs, swales, the urban forest, soils, parks, etc. Noting that green infrastructure is at the heart of the work landscape architects do, Cirillo invites participation of OALA members in the initiative. To find out more, visit www.greeninfrastructureontario.org.

Toronto Park People is a new organization dedicated to improving Toronto’s parks. The organization advocates for better parks for all citizens and communities by: facilitating citizen engagement in their parks; supporting a network of local community park groups; acting as a watchdog on issues affecting parks; and highlighting the importance of great parks to the social, health, environmental, and economic well being of the city. For more information, visit www.parkpeople.ca.

The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects is proud to recognize and welcome the following new Full Members to the Association.

Sara Bellaire *
Deanne Christie
Phillip A Collins *
Claude Cormier
Normand Guenette
Yang Huang
Jonathan A Loschmann
Denis Guy Massie
Alissa North *
Dali Peng *

Asterisk (*) denotes a Full Member not having custody and use of the Association Seal.

Scapegoat, a new journal of architecture, landscape, and political economy, was recently launched in Toronto. Examining the relationship between capitalism and the built environment, the theme of the first issue is “property.” Scapegoat is edited by Adrian Blackwell and Etienne Turpin. For more information, visit www.scapegoatjournal.org.

in memoriam

John Altorio, OALA

By Sid Thakar, OALA

John Altorio, OALA, left his mark on the landscape of the nation’s capital during a distinguished career spanning more than three decades. A graduate of the University of Toronto School of Landscape Architecture, he worked with D.W. Graham and Associates in the late seventies, rising to the level of Senior Associate. After starting his own consulting firm, Altorio Associates, in 1980, he worked with a wide variety of clients in the private as well as public sectors and left an excellent legacy of projects that have stood the test of time, including award-winning examples such as the York Street Fountain and the David Florida Lab campus in Ottawa.

John generously gave of his time to the profession as a member of OALA Council for many years in the 1980s and was involved in local activities as well. John was known by all as a genial, generous, and friendly colleague with a great sense of humour, and an unfailing readiness to help anyone who approached him. He was a certified Vectorworks (MiniCad) instructor and taught courses in landscape architecture, site design and computer 3-D modelling at local institutions of higher learning. He is survived by his wife, Louise, two children, Shawn and Natasha, and two grandchildren.

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