The restorative power of parks and public spaces:
What works and what doesn't work?

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FALSE CREEK NORTH, VANCOUVER

PARKS AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Most residents overwhelmingly satisfied with local parks

Regular use by residents

Less satisfied: families & lower income groups

Needs:
- Play equipment:
  - more varied
  - adventurous
- places for teenagers

Dogs in public parks: polarizing & emotional topic

What could be changed to better serve your recreational / leisure needs?

	number of responses	percent of total responses
no changes	170	26.1 %
more amenities for relaxation	162	24.9%
other	103	15.8%
more recreational activities for adults	94	14.4%
more park or open space	78	12.0%
more recreational activities for children	44	6.8%
Total	651	100%

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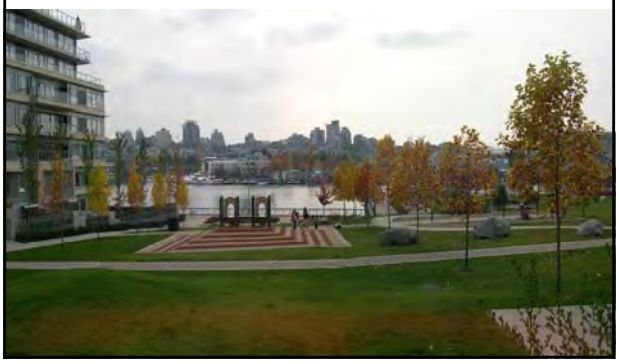
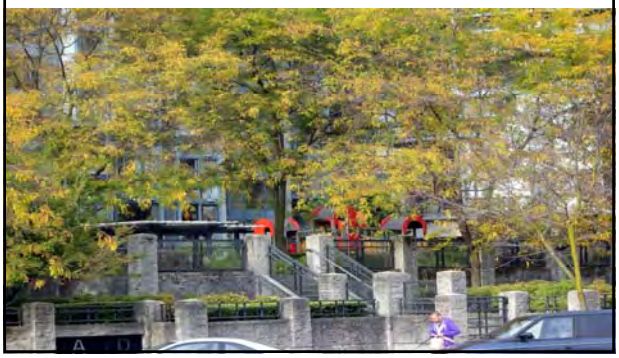
Parks and plazas



Shared Open Space

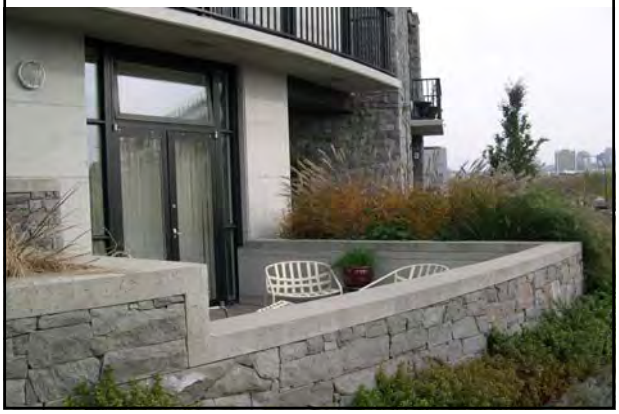
Shared Open Space and children's play



Views

Private Open Space

Private Open Space



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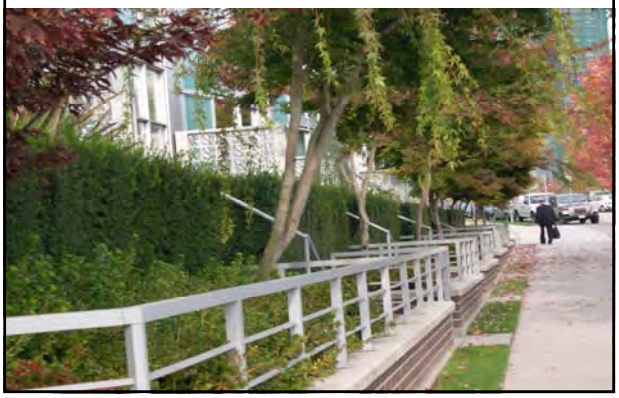
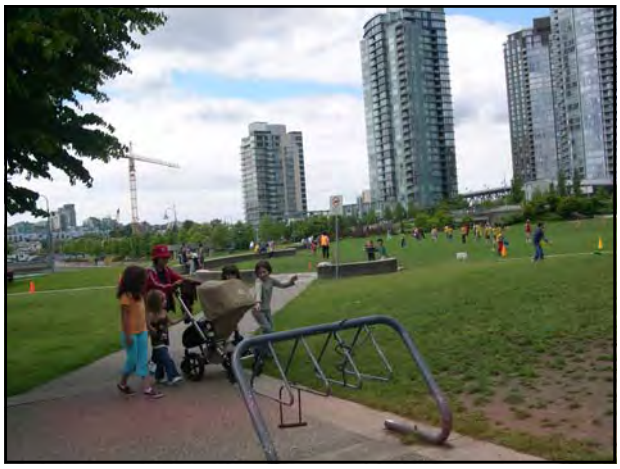


SUITABILITY FOR FAMILIES

1. Children happy living in neighbourhood
2. Parents: more time to spend with family
3. Major challenge for parents: child care & schools
4. Affordable & family-oriented shops lacking
5. Inadequate in-unit space in the unit: a challenge
6. Inadequate activities for older children & teens

CHILDREN'S PLAY



ALL AGES CAN PLAY

False Creek North POE

www.pricetags.ca/pricetags/pricetags104.pdf

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A Puzzle

Why is it that:

We spend huge amounts on our parks

But:

- People **love** some parks and keep coming back?

A Puzzle

Why is it that:

- People find other parks **disappointing** and do not return?

Poorly Designed Parks

Break basic rules

Are monotonous

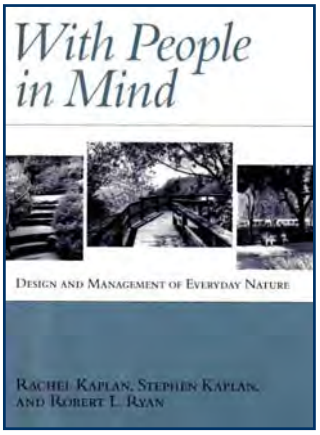
Lack complexity and mystery

Don't provide key requirements

Don't communicate well

Ignore ***landscape research findings***

BALDDI



BEES and ***HoLiSTiCS***

Successful Urban Parks

1. **people's preferences**
2. **restorative**: help people recover from stress of daily urban life

Restorative Powers of Nature

- *Pleasure*
- *Sustained interest*
- *Relaxed wakefulness*
- *Reduced negative emotions (anger, anxiety)*

in Restorative Parks. . .

1. Nature provides psychological and spiritual replenishment
2. Landscape elements are linked in a network

Restorative Parks

Four Keys to a Restorative Park

4 Keys to a Restorative Park

BEES

Being away
Extent
Environmental fit or compatibility
Soft Fascination

Those were Four Keys
to
Healing and Restoration

Now. . .

Examples

how to create parks to meet most people's

Preferences

HoLiSTiCS

- ***whole is more than the sum of its parts***
- through creative evolution, Nature forms wholes greater than sum of the parts
- environmentally and socially sustainable arrangement of space: essentially holistic

HoLiSTiCS

H = Hint of a view

L = Landmark

S = Simple path structure

T = Tranquil and serene

C = Chance to see what's there

S = Small spaces made to look larger

*H*oLiSTiCS

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Preference 1:
The *hint* of a view

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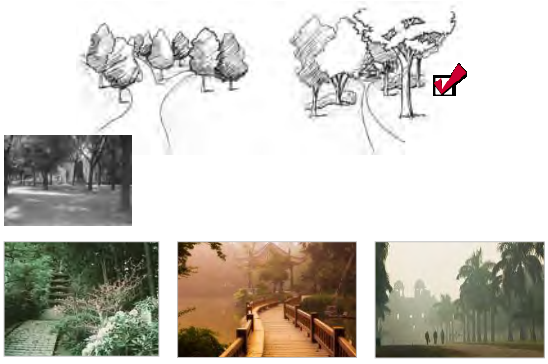
Preference 2:
Path with a landmark at a focal point



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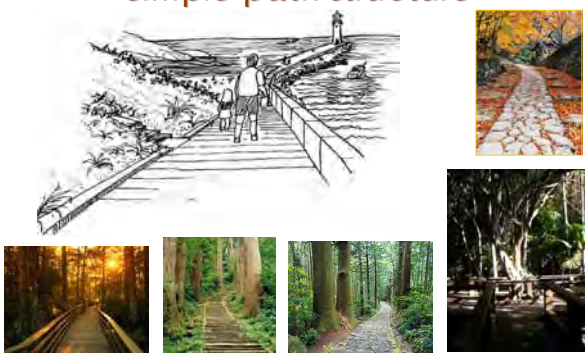
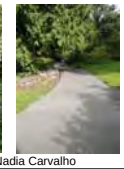
Preference 3:
Simple path structure



Path Preferences

- narrow
- curved rather than straight
- sense of mystery
- designed to make small areas seem much larger

A path with a combination of open and wooded areas



Photos: Nadia Carvalho

Smooth surfaces along paths increase perceived width

Photos: Nadia Carvalho

Wayfinding:
good signs and maps

Wayfinding:
good signs and maps

Photo: Nadia Carvalho

A good sign that can make you cry

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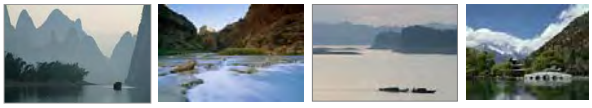
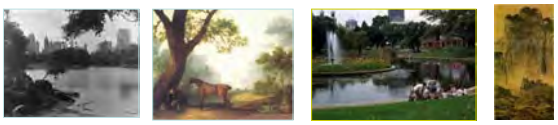
Preference 4:
Tranquil and Serene



Tranquil and Serene



Tranquil and Serene

Try to avoid this

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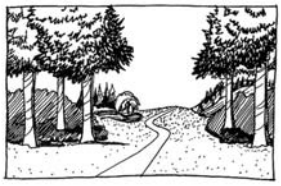
Preference 5:
A chance to see what's there



Mystery and anticipation

The promise that one can find out more as one keeps going

Prospect Refuge

Photo: von Bredow, 2005

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Preference 6:
Making a small space feel **larger**

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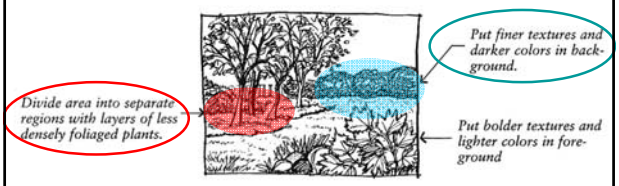

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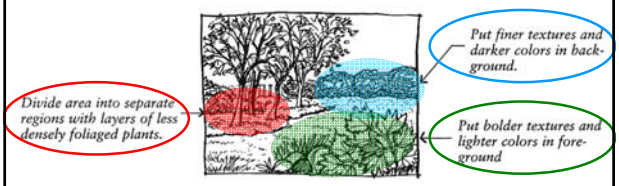


Making a small space feel larger

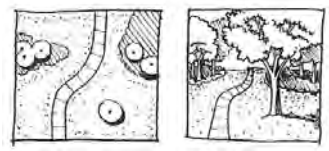
Photo: Nadia Carvalho

Size is not important to whether a space provides restorative benefits

Big areas more interesting if divided
- Sense of enclosure
- Partial enclosure

Photo: Nancy Hofer

Wide areas broken up



HoLiSTiCS

- Smaller spaces linked together to make complex wholes
- Mosaics in a network
- Web-like structures
- Mirror ecological processes
- Each space and links between them designed to encourage restorative experiences
- Woven into fabric of cities in a more holistic way

Restorative Parks

Three easy ways to achieve them

1. BEES
2. HoLiSTiCS
3. **Community engagement**
   (a conversation for another time)

4 Keys to a Restorative Park

BEES

1. **B**eing away
2. **E**xtent
3. **E**nvironmental fit or compatibility
4. **S**oft Fascination

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Community *Engagement*

Community renewal, Bonnyrigg, Sydney, 2005

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www.CityEyePhotography.com

False Creek North POE

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