

*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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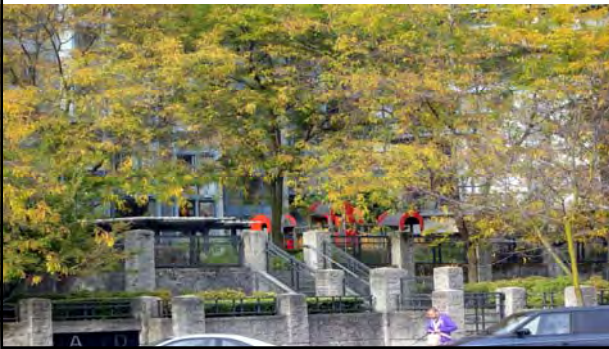
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Shared Open Space



Shared Open Space
and children's play



Views



Private Open Space



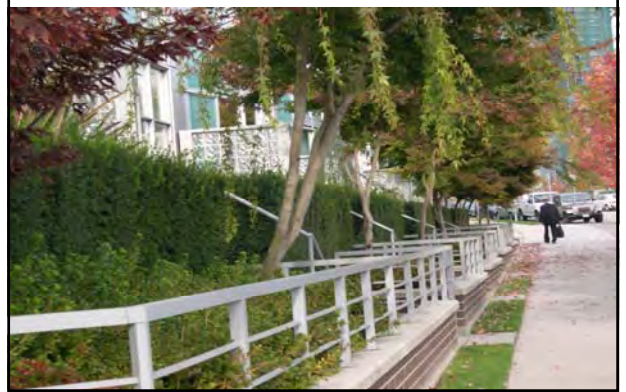
Private Open Space



Private Open Space

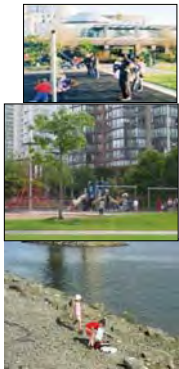


Private Open Space



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

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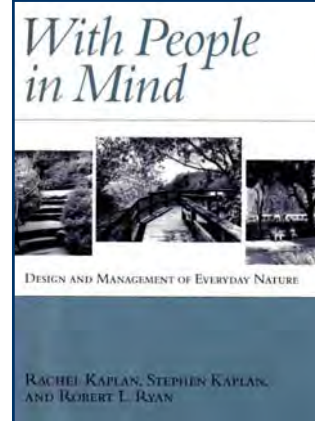
- People find other parks **disappointing** and do not return?



Poorly Designed Parks

- B**reak basic rules
- A**re monotonous
- L**ack complexity and mystery
- D**on't provide key requirements
- D**on't communicate well
- I**gnore *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

H_oLiSTiCS

- *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



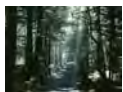
H_oLiSTiCS

- 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

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Preference 1: The *hint* of a view



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



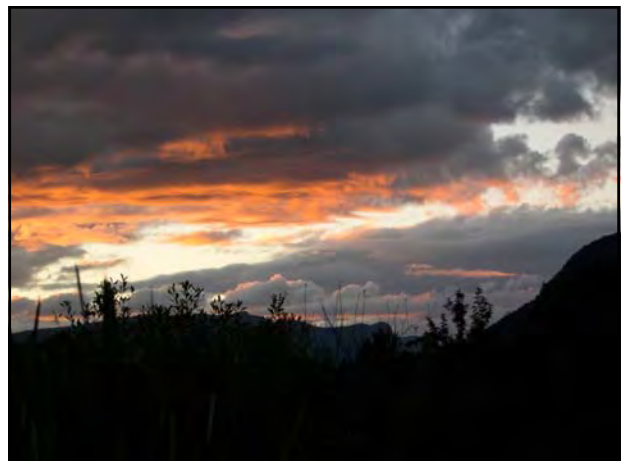
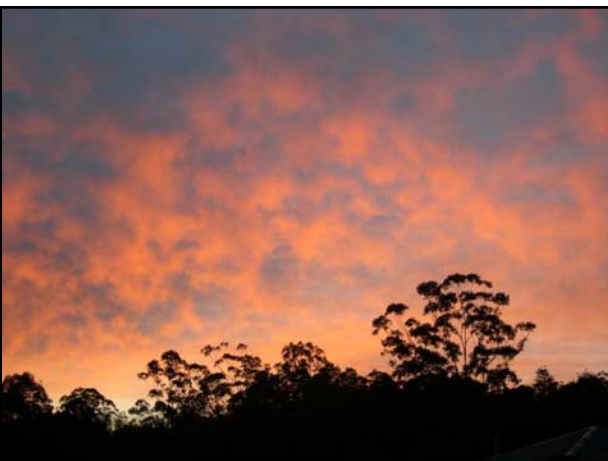
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Preference 4: Tranquil and Serene

Tranquil and Serene

Tranquil and Serene



Try to avoid this



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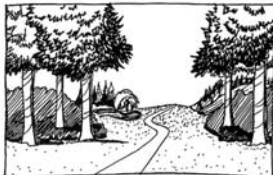
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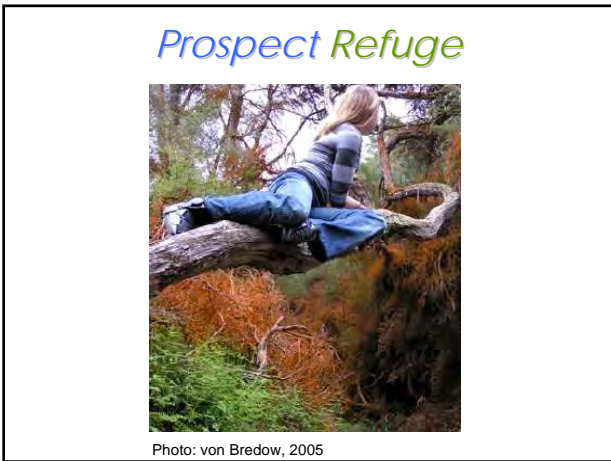
Preference 5:
A chance to see what's there



Mystery and anticipation

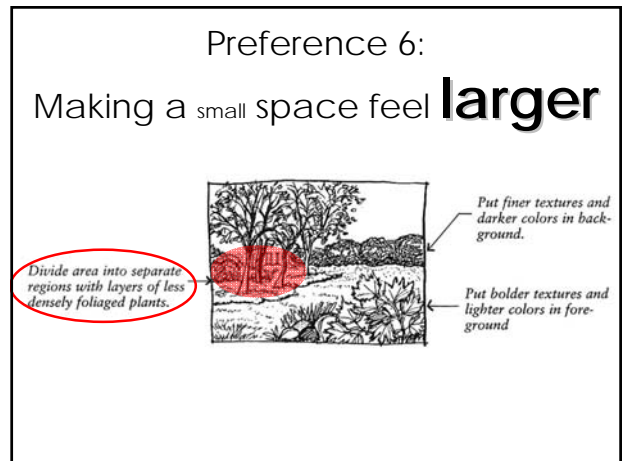
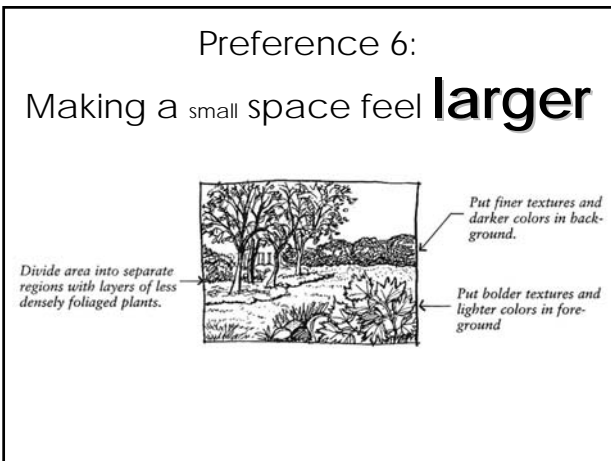
The promise that one can find out more as one keeps going





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

Divide area into separate regions with layers of less densely foliated plants.

Put finer textures and darker colors in background.

Put bolder textures and lighter colors in foreground.

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Making a small space feel larger

Size is not important to whether a space provides restorative benefits

Big areas more interesting if divided

- Sense of enclosure
- Partial enclosure

Photo: Nadia Carvalho

Photo: Nancy Hofer

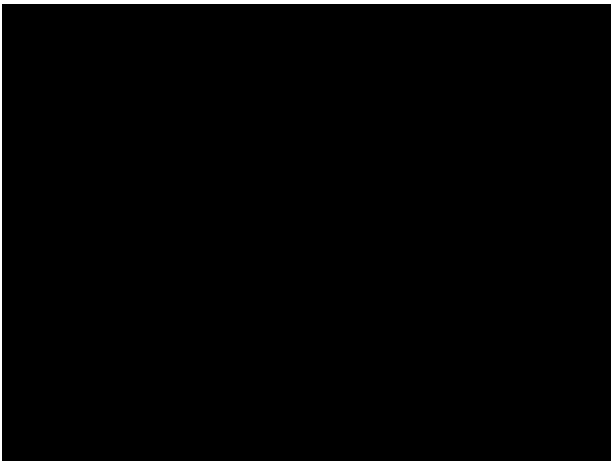
Wide areas broken up

Try to avoid this



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

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Community Engagement



Grateful thanks to:

- Catherine Zheyu Zhou
- Nancy Hofer
- Michelle Babiuk
- Nadia Carvalho
- City Eye Photography,
Vancouver



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