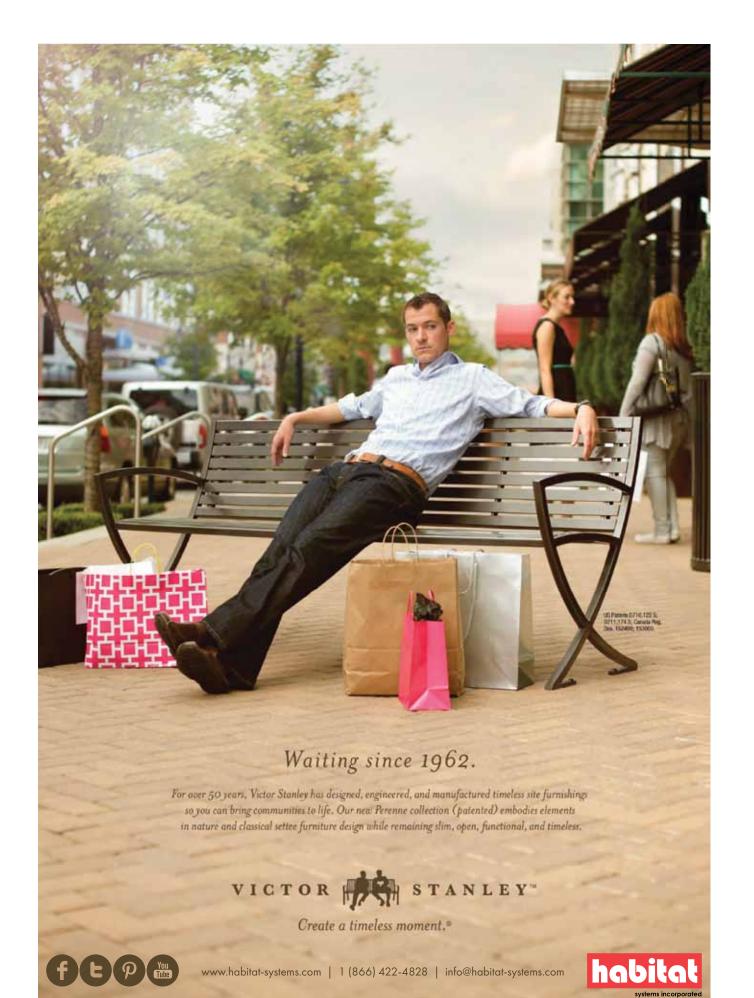
## OCTOBER 2015 SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



## THE POWER OF PLACE: BC DESIGN

The Power of Place: BC Design | A Land That Seeps Through One's Pores: Reflections in the Land of the Garry Oak Knowing the Land Beneath Our Feet: The Logan Creek Integrity Project | A Better Way: New Urbanism in Cascadia Trees are Portals: A Sacred Grove and Performance in Stanley Park | Creating A Place Called Pinetree Way



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## The POWER of place: BC Design Andrew Robertson, MBCSLA, LEED® AP

The theme of this issue of Sitelines is "The Power of Place: BC Design." For many, British Columbia offers a powerful sense of place, a deeply felt response to its grand natural and cultural landscapes. Some even speak of a distinctive atmosphere or pervading spirit found here.

Indigenous site design taps into genius loci. It is inspired by and responsive to the natural and cultural phenomena that surround and permeate a place. In BC, this approach has taken on a wide range of expressions: from referencing natural features, materials, and plant material to incorporating First Nations art and cultural practices, from West Coast Modernism to Vancouverism.

Indigenous site design often expresses strong placemaking qualities. Placemaking here not only involves the introduction of locally sourced elements and references but also the creation of spaces where experiences occur, memories are created and identities are formed. The best placemaking site designs strengthen what is special about a place and those who frequent it.

British Columbia has something else that facilitates strong placemaking design: a healthy landscape architecture industry. Our industry requires two things to thrive-a mild climate and disposable income. Metro Vancouver, in particular, has both. Our mild climate promotes outdoor living and investment in outdoor spaces while relative affluence pushes site design beyond the purely functional. Distinct, aesthetically pleasing, and evocative designed outdoor spaces emerge.

Despite these advantages, BC has more than its share of generic built spaces, including vast tracts of urban sprawl. Cultural globalization, Internationalism, and standardization are all at play here, working against what makes this place and its people unique.

Will the power of place find increasing expression in British Columbia or will placelesssness prevail? Landscape architects have a role to play in the outcome. If we design sites that speak of special places and the people who inhabit them, they are more likely to be occupied, appreciated, and maintained; they are more likely to persist. If our work deepens the connection we have to the land under our feet and the people around us, the power of this place will only strengthen. **SL** 



Cover Image: Randy Sharp

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## A Place That Seeps Through One's Pores:

## REFLECTIONS

in the Land of the Garry Oak Jocelle Smith, BCSLA Intern



one of the most definitive
native ecosystems of British
Columbia. Within it are
more plant species than in
any other coastal BC terrestrial
ecosystem. Many of these
species are found nowhere
else in Canada. Garry oak
ecosystems are comprised of
Quercus garryana, western
Canada's only native oak tree,
along with a wealth of other
flora and fauna that predate
European colonization. Within
Canada, these ecosystems are
limited almost exclusively
to a narrow strip along
southeast Vancouver Island
and the Gulf Islands. 1

My recent solo bike camping trip to Ruckle Park on Saltspring Island exposed me to this rare landscape. One question I pondered throughout my trip was, "Why are human beings so innately drawn to these places?" Generally, when we sit in a beautiful landscape, our greatest desire is for an immersive experience - to absorb nature through all of our senses and feel its restorative qualities. The Garry oak ecosystem teaches me how nature creates its own holistic and immaculately constructed landscape experience, one whose assortment of flora and fauna operate in symbiotic balance.

This is how the landscape revealed itself to me:

A dusty road carves through thickly forested Salal and Douglas fir, trickles into a footpath, then without warning, opens up into a vast golden meadow. The meadow pours over an embankment, abutting dark, gently sloping sandstone that merges into an endless expanse of ocean. The molten layers of sandstone, weathered cambium lines in the sunbleached driftwood, clusters of tidal pool life – all point to how nature organizes in complex patterns, even if seemingly





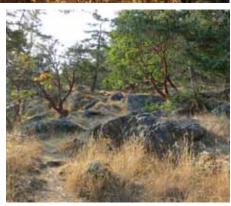
random. Perhaps a take-home design lesson. The autumnal air is scented with a rich, multi-layered sweetness; a collective effort by the many types of dried grasses<sup>2</sup>, ripened black raspberry3, trailing blackberry4, and grapefruit-scented Grand fir needles. The grasses are knee-high in some spots, and pushed over in others. Their seedhead plumes ripple gently in the light breeze. The ocean relentlessly laps its tongue over tidal pools, filtered by families of dusty-rose colored aggregating anemone<sup>5</sup>. Heading southward, the meadow fragments into several distinct forms: islands of broad sandstone; small groves of Garry oak with their gnarled twisting trunks; and tree-sized Nootka rose bushes. At the top of a knoll, three visual planes — grass/rock/trees come into view and calm the eye. The rock's grey, crumbling texture is a complementary foil to the bleach blonde grass tufts at their base. If this were a painting, the artist would boldly slash at his canvas with his most vibrant flamered hue — bringing together the scene with a few well-placed Arbutus trunks.

This is a good place to sit and listen to the crickets' plaintive song. A closer look at the surroundings reveals imperfection, disfigurement from the elements. Near the cliff edges, Garry oaks stand barely knee-high, stunted into little bonsai groves. White lichen and tiny sedum forests cling parasitically to the rock faces,

betraying their age. Tree branches contort and curl, bracing from the memory of storms. Even the leaves on the large Garry oaks are marred while their dead lower branches spiral into the air. These trees would certainly be rejected from the planting plan of most projects. But here their imperfection speaks of a sincerity, of lives lived intrinsically in this place.

Continuing south, the rocky meadow becomes savannah-like, gaining a light tree canopy. The forest is continuously shifting at its seams; fauna — each time a different species — reveals itself. A lost and bleating black-tail fawn wanders by, a quivering Townsend's vole found under a leaf, a sharp-tailed snake<sup>6</sup> weaves quickly out of view, the soft, solemn hoot of a Great Horned owl resonates. It is a marvel how this dry and weathered landscape supports such diversity.

There is a prevailing awareness that the Garry oak ecosystem, and other native ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest may disappear in the near future. Climate change, invasive species, and development have already changed them greatly. These forces may soon push them to extinction. It is fortunate that relatively intact areas such as that within Ruckle Park still remain. We can try our best to protect and preserve, but unfortunately, the end result may be beyond our control. As such, we should



All images courtesy of Jocelle Smith.

appreciate such ecosystems while they are with us. As well, we can learn from nature's effortless design in hopes that we, like nature, can create landscapes that seep through our pores and reinvigorate us. If we study this landscape and remember it, imprint it on our psyche, and let it guide us as we choose the palettes of our designed landscapes, perhaps we can help this ecosystem live on in other ways long after it has gone. SL

- http://www.goert.ca/about/ why\_important.php
- Native grasses include brome grasses (Bromus carinatus, sitchensis and vulgaris), sedge (Carex bigelowii), oatgrass (Danthonia californica), rye (Elymus glaucus), fescue (Festuca rubra), and barley (Hordeum brachyantherum)
- Rubus lecodermis
- Rubus ursinus
- Anthopleura elegantissima
- Contia tenuis

# KNOVINS the Land Beneath Our Feet:

Dr. Kathy Dunster, R.P. Bio, MBCSLA, Urban Ecosystems Program, KPU School of Horticulture

## The Logan Creek Integrity Project

Kwantlen Polytechnic University's (KPU) Langley Campus sits next to Logan Creek, one of the three tributaries to the upper Nicomekl River. The river is an important salmon bearing waterway with its headwaters in the Township of Langley, and flows through the City of Langley and Surrey before emptying into Boundary Bay near White Rock. The KPU Langley Campus is home to the School of Horticulture and the new Bachelor of Horticultural Science Urban Ecosystems degree program.

**The KPU Langley Campus sits within the territory** of the Kwantlen First Nation (KFN) to which the university derived its name. The KPU Langley site has a long history of settler colonisation beginning

during the Colony of British Columbia period (1858-1866) and continuing after the amalgamation in 1866 with the Colony of Vancouver Island to form British Columbia, before entering confederation with Canada in 1871. Agricultural practices included draining native wet prairie, ditching, and planting pasture grasses and orchards. Remnants of the agricultural period remain today along with a house constructed in 1890 and occupied by the Robert Wark family who were related to John Wark of Victoria.

In 1846 John Wark was a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company placed in charge of the HBC coastal trade including Fort Simpson, Fort Stikine, Fort Langley, and the Beaver paddle wheeler on the Fraser River. By 1853, Governor James Douglas appointed John Wark to the Legislative Council of Vancouver Island where he was often Acting-Governor when Douglas was away. The colonial decisions from this period included the disposition of 20-acre lots of land (claimed for the Crown in 1792) to settlers for £1 per acre, and the taking of territory from First Nations to do so.

From this brief historical narrative you can see that knowing something about the history of the land beneath our feet is ▶







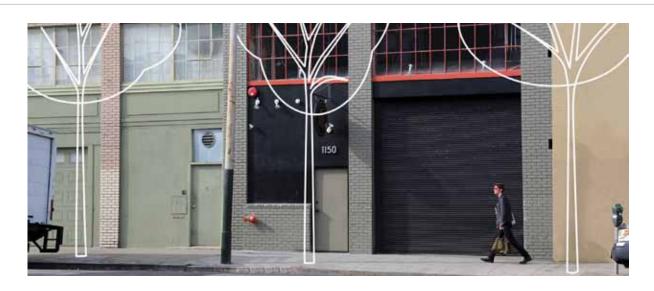
All images courtesy of Kathy Dunster.

essential before beginning any planning or design project on the KPU Langley campus. In the fall of 2013, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada visited BC and KPU committed to find ways to increase awareness and acknowledge the injustices experienced by Aboriginal people. KPU chose a theme of "Weaving

Together: Healing, Education and Reconciliation." The theme aligned perfectly with the KPU direction for experiential learning across all academic disciplines to engage learners directly in the phenomena being studied. The Urban Ecosystems Program explored its role in healing and reconciliation and hatched the Logan Creek Integrity Project.

Integrity refers to both cultural integrity and ecological integrity. The Logan Creek riparian area has lost fish and wildlife habitat and is starved of water inputs by paving, buildings, and the alteration of runoff. The long-term goal is that the restored and redesigned riparian forest will support a thriving, biodiverse salmon habitat and nourish native fruit-bearing and medicinal plants traditionally used by the Kwantlen First Nation. At its simplest level, we are de-colonizing the project site by removing non-native plant species from the settler period, and re-indigenizing the site with native plant species. Rather than completely erase the existing site, we are weaving into the design a few remnant plants such as a giant black walnut to serve as reminders of the site's colonial history.

A graduation research project in spring 2015 saw the design and installation of a 1500 m2 berry-picking patch featuring most of the edible berry shrubs used by Coast Salish peoples. With funding from CN Eco-connexions, work has begun this fall on the remaining 1.5 hectares of riparian fringe forest using the combined workforce of six different classes spread across diploma and degree programs. By the end of November 2015, it is anticipated that the site will include selfguided trails, new plantings, interpretive signs in English and Hun'qumi'num dialect, and a welcome invitation to all visitors to "pick the berries." SL



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# A Better Way: | Let | L



As urban designers, we all have images of what constitutes good or bad neighbourhood design. Many associate bad design with sprawling suburbia with its faceless familiarity and lonely cul-de-sacs, far removed from transit hubs and services; and connected to the urban heart via wide, high speed roadways. Although unhealthy (to both individuals and communities), unsustainable and uninspiring, this model very much persists today. While growth is inevitable, is there a better way to plan and design our neighbourhoods?

Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) founders Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck say there is. Duany and Zyberk are most famously known for the Florida resort town of Seaside that awakened many to the idea that what is old is new again. The development also proved that the traditional idea of town planning still appeals to a great many. In fact, the notion of a cohesive building scheme, walkable neighbourhoods, public gathering spaces and "front porch socializing" has proven so popular that Seaside enjoys a real estate price premium over adjacent car-centric communities. "New Urbanism" envisions centrally located, pedestrianfriendly residential areas accommodating an assortment of housing forms in urban centres rather than in far-flung suburbs. In essence, New Urbanism is about creating sustainable, human-scaled places where people can live healthy and happy lives.

As a body, CNU advocates public-policy changes that can facilitate the urban developments and resulting communities that people care about.

Members are the life of the organization — they are the planners, developers, architects, engineers, public officials, investors and community activists who create and influence our built environment, transforming growth patterns from the inside out, and making it easier for people to live healthy lives. Whether it's bringing restorative plans to hurricane-battered communities in the Gulf Coast, turning dying malls into active mixed-use neighborhoods, or reconnecting ▶

isolated public housing projects to the surrounding fabric, new urbanists are providing leadership in community building.' (CNU Website- www.cnu.org)

Another significant CNU achievement is the creation of the LEED® for Neighborhood Development system (LEED®-ND). This was done by working with the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). LEED®-ND recognizes new developments that achieve sustainability and energy efficiency by building compact, walkable, and accessible neighbourhoods in an urban context.

The adage 'Highways to Boulevards' guides CNU's work in transportation reform. CNU works to put pedestrians back at the centre of the public realm and has worked to establish new street design standards, advocating a shift towards multimodal transportation planning.

Are you interested in learning more? CNU-Cascadia will be holding their Annual Vancouver Summit 2015 on November 6-8. The Summit is entitled "The Business of Northwest New Urbanism + Bridging Sustainability and Aboriginal Values."

CNU-Cascadia, as an advocate for pedestrian-oriented, sustainable urban design, is reaching out to the board planning and design community to attend and participate in the Summit and their on-going city-building discussions.

The Vancouver Summit 2015 has two major goals. The first is to encourage the implementation of walkable neighbourhood design through informal business networking by a broad range of stakeholders and decision makers interested in green city-building. The second focus is to start building relationships with First Nations, as this community takes on larger roles in a variety of developments in BC and

elsewhere, and to find opportunities for collaborative learning.

Speakers will include Derek Lee, MBCSLA, LEED® AP, Principal, PWL Partnership with Lisa Spitale, CAO, City of New Westminster. Kristina Salin, MBCSLA MCIP, RPP of KSalin Land Planning will be presenting an Urban Designers Pecha Kucha on the theme: "Pedestrian Oriented Urban Design + Green Cities". SL

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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gvenczel@cityscapedesign.ca or visit the CNU Cascadia website to register for the Summit:

http://www.cnucascadia.org/ 2015-cnu-cascadia-summit

All images courtesy of Kristina Salin.





All images courtesy of Randy Sharp.

# Trees are Portals:

A Sacred Grove and Performance in Stanley Park

Randy Sharp, FCSLA, ASLA, LEED<sup>®</sup> A.P., G.R.P.

"Old-growth trees in Stanley Park are living portals. They are witnesses of ancient Coast Salish celebrations and ceremonies, they are the connectors, the ones who will remember today's songs and dances when we too are gone." In September, a performance called 'Trees are Portals' incorporating traditional Coast Salish performance with contemporary aerial dance was held in a forest grove in Stanley Park, Vancouver. The grove, next to the Rose Garden, features four tall Douglas firs in an open circle, surrounded by layers of rainforest vegetation.



The fir tree trunks, free of branches, supported dancers attached with ropes and harnesses. The aerial performers, from the Aeriosa dance company, knotted and wound together, then unfurled in beautiful patterns, and hung straight upside down, their hands joined. We witnessed a wordless language, emotional and exciting.

Meanwhile, Spakwus Slulem, the Eagle Song Dancers, arrived by canoe at the former Khwaykhway village site at Lumberman's Arch, and led a procession across the Park. After a canoe protocol and welcoming, they performed traditional dance, singing, chanting and drumming. The climax of the song and the dance aerial performance was the uplifting of the thunderbird dancer high into the tree canopy to connect with the spirits and the living portals.

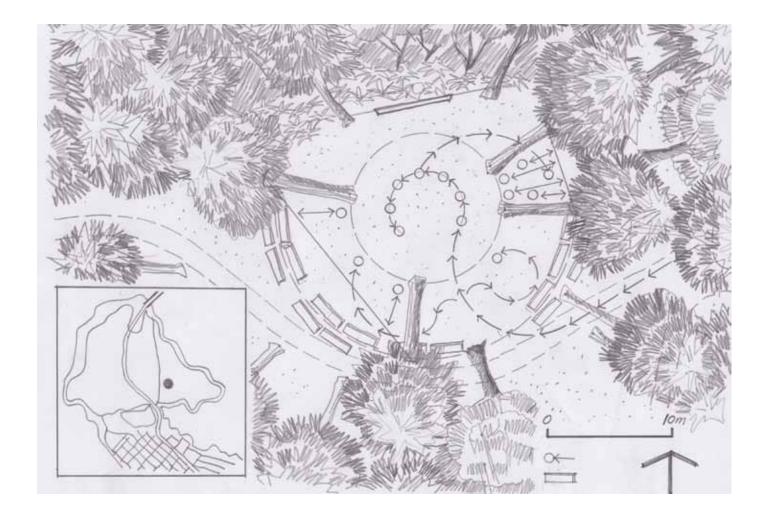
"Aeriosa is a dance company that combines rock climbing with contemporary dance, so

that we can lift our performances onto buildings and mountains and suspend them in the air from tall trees." Julia Taffe, the founding artistic director of Aeriosa, started off as a contemporary dancer, then became a rock climbing guide, and eventually brought these two practices together. "What you see in an Aeroisa show is dancers suspended by climbing ropes wearing climbing harnesses or other types of circus or stunt harnesses... That feeling of swooping like a bird over the landscape or over people offers a different perspective on life. It is very exciting for people."

Spakwus Slulem, which is translated as Eagle Song Dancers, are members of the Squamish Nation whose traditional territory includes Vancouver, Howe Sound and Whistler. Bob S7aplek Baker is the artistic director and co-founder. "We are a Coastal people, people of the cedar longhouses, of the great sea-going canoes, the racing war

canoes, People of the Salmon." Spakwus Slulem and Aeriosa have collaborated several times since 2011 designing projects in Whistler and Vancouver for cultural dance inspired by place, cultural themes, and Coast Salish stories.

Spakwus Slulem performed the Song of the Thunderbird, newly written in a traditional form that honors the canoe protocol. Traveling by water to visit a village in a new territory, the canoe protocol is the practice of marking the canoe, identifying it by song and displaying the paddle, followed by the village residents acknowledging and welcoming the visitors. The Thunderbird traditional and contemporary dance was first performed 2011 in Vancouver by the two dance companies in on the side of the 12-storey office tower of Library Square. Aeriosa danced through the air while Spakwus Slulem formed the shape of the canoe in the plaza below.



The site for 'Trees are Portals' was selected for its central location in the Park near major attractions and the bus loop. While the site allowed easy access, it required the public to discover this quiet hidden place in the forest. The traditional ceremony on the ground, and the animation of dancers in the canopy above allowed the audience to experience the transformation. The grove trees became witnesses of ancestral songs and dances and connectors through time. SL

Site Design: The Creator, and Bob S7aplek Baker & Julia Taffe Artistic Direction: Bob S7aplek Baker: Spakwus Slulem, & Julia Taffe: Aeriosa

- 1. http://www.aeriosa.com/files/calendar.html
- 2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlseN8biiLU
- 3. http://www.eaglesongdancers.org/about.html



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## Creating a Place Called Andrew Robertson, MBCSLA, LEED® AP, Manager, Landscape Architecture, ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd.

## Pinetree Way

Visit Pinetree Way, the City of Coquitlam's "Main Street," these days and you will see it in the midst of major transformation. Towers are rising, skytrain stations are being constructed, the roadway is being reconfigured, sidewalks are widening, new public plazas and street trees are on the way. Yet beyond these physical alterations, something else is at play here: A change in how the street operates and, in fact, its very character. The Pinetree Way Enhancements project is as much an exercise in placemaking as it is in city building. It is an effort to create a place called Pinetree Way.

The Pinetree Way Enhancements streetscape project runs from Barnet/ Lougheed Highway to Town Centre Boulevard, a distance of 1.2 km. This street section runs through the commercial and civic heart of the City. Adjacent structures include Coquitlam Centre, the City's largest mall, City Hall, the City Centre Library, the Evergreen Cultural Centre, and the City Centre Aquatic Complex. Town Centre Park, the City's premier public open space, as well as Coquitlam's Douglas College campus are located on the northern edge of the project site.

Prior to the Enhancements project, Pinetree Way had a very car-centric character: a six lane arterial roadway with heavy traffic loads during peak hours. Pedestrian amenities were limited to standard width sidewalks, with few

furnishings and minimal roadside buffer planting. As a consequence, pedestrian traffic on the street was light and pedestrian lingering virtually non-existent.

The introduction of the Evergreen Line skytrain to Pinetree Way, slated for opening in 2016, has become a catalyst for redevelopment on the street. Residential towers clustered around the street's two skytrain stations are appearing. This is in keeping with the City's plans for mixeduse densification at transit hubs. It also aligns with the City's vision to transform its urban core into a vibrant commercial, residential and cultural destination, supported by multi-modal transportation systems.

All of this urban planning and development along Pinetree Way pressed the need for a new and responsive streetscape design. The street needed a cohesive design >





All images by ISL Engineering and Land Services.

shaped by a "Big Idea" to contend with the disparate styles of existing adjacent architecture, the presence of arterial road traffic, and the scale of the emerging built form.

#### What does this place want to be?

A 2013 Pinetree Way streetscape stakeholder workshop identified some of the aspirations the participants had for the street. Descriptors such as "a destination," "a place not just to visit but to linger," and a "people place" were heard. The goal became to generate a streetscape design that would not only attract people but hold them there, to create a place both compelling and resonant.

As Coquitlam's most prominent street and the site of its new urban expression, the Pinetree Way streetscape called for placemaking design. As the street has a limited history, first appearing on City maps in the 1950's, and few distinguishing characteristics that the stakeholders wanted to see carried into the new design, inspiration for a new expression was sought further afield.

The 2013 workshop identified the "green hills" above the City and the watercourses

that extend down through the City as defining characteristics and places many Coquitlam residents have great affinity for. The salmon historically found in City's waterways also have symbolic significance to the community as the name Coquitlam is derived from the First Nations word "Kwi kwe t lem", meaning 'red fish up the river.'

Pinetree Way, running from its northern origin up in the hills down to the City centre, became another potential avenue of nature extending into the urban fabric. From this concept, the "Big Idea" of "Pinetree Way—where Nature meets the City," was born.

#### Where Nature meets the City

The Pinetree Way Enhancements streetscape is where Coquitlam's defining natural elements "meet" and "converse" with the cityscape, with each shaping the other.

Coquitlam's watercourses find expression on Pinetree Way not only in roadside bioswales but also at a paving and lighting feature called "the Stream." Here coloured concrete, luminescent aggregate, and silicone carbine paving additives create a shimmering

visual effect. The impression of moving water also occurs on the underside of the skytrain guideway above where accent lighting projects waves and ripples. The wave patterning is carried to the form of a new fence in the street median where schools of stainless steel salmon appear to swim with the currents of the passing road traffic.

Pinetree Way Enhancements brings the City's forests to the street. New street trees are in abundance. Where the street becomes too constrained for trees, an organic array of white steel poles is introduced. Entitled "The Branches," the poles reference the lower needleless limbs of the City's surrounding conifer forests. Coquitlam's mountains are introduced to the street by means of granite, sourced from the hills above, found in paving bands and custom bench cladding, patterned as naturally-occurring rock strata.

The most prominent new features on Pinetree Way are two 12m tall gateway columns positioned on either end of the project site. The lower portion of the structure is shaped as a Pine treerepresenting not just of the street's name but also the City's significant historic lumber industry. The upper portion of the structure is a cylindrical translucent column with ever — changing lighting projections. The patterns, triggered by passing pedestrian, cyclist, car, and skytrain traffic, is expressive of the street's new multi-modal transportation nature.

### Where People Gather

While the introduction of new features along Pinetree Way may initially draw people to the street, places are only created if people occupy them and do so for lengths of time. Three streetscape design moves to pedestrianize the street are intended to achieve this goal.

The first pedestrian enhancement on Pinetree Way is the introduction of a 4.0m wide, off-road, multi-use path along the length of the project site. The path is intended for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooters. Divided where possible, the path is located under the skytrain guideway to provide weather protection, and offers resting spots along its course. The path links the street's two skytrain stations as well as several of its civic centres and new public plazas.

The second pedestrian enhancement on Pinetree Way minimizes the impact of vehicle traffic on the pedestrian experience. Roadside street trees, bioswales, and planting beds buffer pedestrians from traffic flows. New on-street parking adds another layer of pedestrian-vehicle separation. Curb bulges reduce pedestrian street crossing times while enhancing their safety. In many locations, road widths are reduced from six to four lanes, signaling a shift towards a more human scaled street.

The third significant pedestrian enhancement to Pinetree Way is the introduction of a 100m long linear public plaza. Well buffered from the street by trees and bioswales and populated with street furnishings, the plaza will provide an everyday respite from the surrounding urban landscape. As well, the plaza will be a venue for street festivals and night markets. A performance platform is planned for one end of the site while an adjacent section of Pinetree Way could be closed for full pedestrian occupation of the street during large civic events.





All of this proposed new streetscape work along Pinetree Way was presented in two public open houses to ensure the design aligned with community values and aspirations for the street.

#### **Creating a Place Together**

By next summer, Pinetree Way Enhancements will be in place. The street will feature unique site furnishings, paving, lighting, and public art. It will also feature new public spaces for gathering, socializing, and celebrating. Will Pinetree Way become a destination, somewhere to linger, a compelling and resonant place? The answer may not lie with those who design or build the Pinetree Way streetscape, but rather with those who will occupy it. More than anything else a place is defined not by its physical properties or programming but rather by the experiences of its users. What makes Pinetree Way become a much visited and engaging place will happen this way as well. SL



Andrew Robertson, with ISL Engineering and Land Services, is the Landscape Architect consultant for the Pinetree Way Enhancements project.



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To learn more about our permeable paver offerings visit us online at www.mutualmaterials.ca or call us at (604) 888-0555.

#### **ECO-PRIORA®**

4 x 8 Unit: 100 mm x 80 mm x 200 mm 8 x 8 Unit: 200 x 80 mm x 200 mm



TURFSTONE®
400 mm x 90 mm x 600 mm



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