

ARCH 350
THEORY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

URBAN LANDSCAPE STUDY:
MAFFEO SUTTON PARK AND
DIANA KRALL PLAZA

Suggested Citation:

Vero-Augustine, L., 2020., Urban Landscape Study:
Maffeo-Sutton Park and Diana Krall Plaza.

COLLECTION 3

LAURA VERO-AUGUSTINE

Nanaimo's downtown centre is compact; dense with history and culture. These urban landscapes are less than a kilometre apart, but they couldn't be more different in character and execution.

This collection explores how Maffeo Sutton Park, a cultural cornerstone of Nanaimo, holds emblems of our city's history, environment and customs, while demonstrating elements of sustainability, and a plan for future growth.

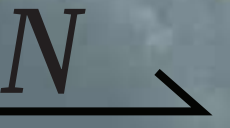
Then we move on to the Diana Krall Plaza, a paved space that has seen attempts and misses to make use of its prime location as a public hub, and present some suggestions and ideas to make the plaza as lively as the park.

This is an existential failure, not merely one of planning, efficiency, or any other aspect of managing the space and downtown inhabitants as things to be ordered. (Bakker, J., 2009, p. 5)

Maffeo Sutton Park (MSP)

Nanaimo's signature park overlooking our world famous harbour
(Maffeo Sutton Park., n.d.)

City of Nanaimo



FORMERLY INDUSTRIAL SITE

Diana Krall Plaza (DKP)

MILITARY MUSEUM

HARBOUR/DOCKS

SEA PLANES

"To date, projects of Landscape Urbanism have been characterized by the re-purposing of abandoned industrial, military or transportation sites and structures into popular park-like destinations to improve civic identity (Kuwabara, 2010, p. 20)."

1

49 10'06.85" N, 123 56'10.72" W Nanaimo, BC

Fig. 1 Overview Map
Locating the DKP and MSP in the context of greater Nanaimo. (Google Maps, 2016)

A TALE OF TWO URBAN LANDSCAPES: READING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

It's a crisp late February morning, and I decided this was a great day to take another walk through the plaza and the park. With the goal of looking at each place with fresh eyes, like a visitor seeing these place for the first time. I decided to pay special attention to the curb appeal of each landscape, its first impression, its entrance. I found that in each of these landscapes, the entrances themselves revealed many elements of what I'd find within each space.

Street parking seemed to be the best option, and I began by parking close to the conference centre and museum, right outside of a coffee shop and a clothing store on Commercial street; on the aptly named main street through Nanaimo's historic downtown, that in 2011 was named Canada's best street by the Canadian Institute of Planners (Bakker, J., 2009, p. 1).

This entrance to the plaza from this angle is at best confusing. From this approach, the features are attractive, but the proportions are restrictive. The paving stones make you question if it is pedestrian only, compounded by the narrow width of the path and the overhead walkway constraining the height. You may be able to pass two vehicles beside each other, but it would be uncomfortable, which is the best description of this entrance. The stone planters are well planted and manicured, even at this early season, which shows care, but instead of forming protection for the pedestrians from traffic, the planters are constraining. They force pedestrians to make an awkward decision or either being pinned to the building, or walk around them in the road.

As I approach the plaza, the pedestrian access is suddenly pinched off awkwardly when the opposite should be true, to invite people into a space, you don't close the door at the last moment, you open it slowly to build anticipation and when the moment is right, the door should be open revealing to the viewer what they came to experience. Here, the pathways are kinked, created as after thoughts where the building design took precedence.

This same morning, I then head over to Maffeo Sutton Park. Taking a few minutes to collect myself and park, I see dozens of people, even on a cool day and on a Monday morning with no events, this place is alive. The parking lot is large and collected, giving pedestrians separation and safety, the encouragement needed to get out of their cars. The open entrance shows features in the distance to explore, sculptures, playgrounds, and a public washroom that encourage you to stay a while. The pathways are numerous and varied, in some places winding and others open with benches that encourage you to watch the world go by, and long flat stretches inviting you to continue your stroll, there's always something of interest in the distance drawing you in further. Maffeo Sutton Park is inviting, open and diverse, and with the portal at its centre it makes literate its industrial history on its posts. Throughout this space the story of indigenous culture and settler culture are revealed.

What is apparent from the front door, the cover of the book, is that Diana Krall Plaza's story lacks in continuity and depth, while Maffeo Sutton's story is rich and complex, a story worth reading again and again.



DIANA KRALL PLAZA

Fig. 2 Diana Krall Plaza Museum Way & Commercial St. Entrance

(Image by author)

Beautiful materials, but with incorrect proportions constrict and confuse flow and restrict movement.

Fig. 3 Maffeo Sutton Main Entrance (Image by author)

A portal into the park frames the mountains in the distance separated by our obvious reminder (the water) of our place in the world as an island.

“Viewers enter at different points, are free to pause, take in the whole image, inspect its parts or review. This changes the traditional relationship between author, text and reader where the author exerts control over the telling. Instead, the spatial narrative is more about showing, relinquishing control to the viewer/reader who must put together sequences, fill in the gaps and decipher meaning (Potteiger, Purinton, 1998, pp. 136–137)”



MAFFEO SUTTON PARK

"It is one thing to design a garden, park or tract of land surrounding a major building as a set piece. It is another to design landscape at an urban scale in the public domain. (Kuwabara, 2010, p. 22)."

"Genius loci cannot be designed to order. It has to evolve, to be allowed to happen, to grow and change from the direct efforts of those who live and work in places and care about them (Relph, E., 1993, p. 103)."

Most Nanaimoites are aware, that Maffeo Sutton park has a history of industrial origins, and that its distinctive, right angled entry into the Georgia strait, is manufactured land. Some might say that this meant the park began as a nearly clean slate, since very few landscapes begin with a decision to create the land where there was previously nothing on which to stand. In Hough's view however, as part of, or even because of the nature in which this land came to be, this site certainly has both "history and a peculiar character" (1990, p. 210). The story of the park itself extends back to the 1940's, when Georgia Park was first acquired by the city. The industry that occupied the site ceased operations, and in the 1960's plans emerged to acquire and amalgamate lands, and applications were made to the Province and the crown to amend the waterways and create the land on which Maffeo Sutton exists (Nanaimo Archives, 1965). Hough explains how creating a place from scratch is a misfortune, and I would agree. Much of the most amazing character of this park comes from where the new landscape merges with the original rock face where the land once met the ocean, see p. 4 bottom left image (Maffeo Sutton Park Improvement Plan).

"Rarely does the designer have the luxury, or more appropriately, the misfortune, to create a place from scratch. Something is always there before he begins: a history, a peculiar character, a meeting place. Design inevitably involves building on what's there in the process of change (Hough, 1990, p. 210)."

MAFFEO SUTTON PARK: LIFETIMES IN THE MAKING

As Kuwabara writes of PFS's efforts in designing public urban landscapes, Maffeo Sutton is a public urban landscape where special efforts and considerations have been made in its planning and execution, over and above what a garden or tract of land might have required. **A public urban landscape needs to be welcoming to all people, all ages, abilities and means, and offer to everyone, space to connect and enjoy an experience together, it requires greater care and consideration to be built into the design,** and that goal, met collaboratively, as Maffeo Sutton Park has, is the foundation of its genius loci.

The City of Nanaimo tends this park carefully, and even today it's still evolving. At the far north point of the park, the Rotary is planning a new garden. The park improvement plan clearly states their goals in improving accessibility, public amenities for special events and public use, and enhance play spaces and waterfront access, and because of this clear vision, and understanding that the spirit of a place comes from its evolution, and even more importantly, engagement from the community every step of the way. Relph writes of how "it is impossible to make complete places in which other people can live", and this might be the single greatest thing the planners of Nanaimo have gotten right (1993, p. 103). The locally famed Architect Ian Niamath is the designer of the Swy-a-Lana Lagoon, which exemplifies how fortunate it can be to work with existing character than to try to completely overrule it. Ian explains his design recalling from the 1980's his intentions, to create a different feature within the park, allowing for a new point of interest to give the viewer pause. As the previous landscape had already allowed the ocean to lap inwards, he built another jutting feature to meet it, and allow the ocean into the landscape

creating a space to swim and play without exposure to the current, boat traffic and other open water hazards. He used what was there and made a new experience that mediated between the park and the waterfront. (personal conversation, Ian Niamath, 2020 Feb 26)

Fig. 4 Maffeo Sutton Park Aerial

Note the long shadow that fractures the bright sunny walking path along the waterfront. As one of the only tall residential structures in Nanaimo there seems to have been a failure to consider the impact of its shadow. When standing in that place it fragments the flow of the park to the waterfront, at an awkward pinchpoint in the landscape, along the stairs blocking the view to the harbourfront walkway. It feels as though the walker should turn back rather than continue the walk. (Google Maps, 2016, annotated by author)



Future Rotary Garden

Children's Playground

Swy-A-Lana Lagoon

Public fishing dock

Original (pre 1960) Waterfront

Original (pre 1960) Waterfront

MSP: MAN MADE ECOLOGY

"A valid design philosophy, therefore, is tied to ecological values and principles; to the notions of environmental and social health; to the essential bond of people to nature, and to the biological sustainability of life itself (Hough, 1990, p.209)."

The designers of Maffeo Sutton Park (MSP) recognized that green space is nourishing and inviting to people. Since the past of this space was one of industry and land creation, each of these features are here by design, selection and care. Designers chose greenery suited to their environments. Indigenous, and hardy species elegantly dress rock faces (bottom left image), feature gardens along walking paths spaces were planted with hardy growth that could survive occasional trappings and remain green over the winter season (top left image).

This landscape shows careful consideration and balance between walking spaces and resting places, brightly coloured floral displays and neutral, open lawns, open access to the waterfront as well as shelter from it.

The ecology of this landscape had to be carefully thought through in terms of maintenance, and as such sustainability. There is no expanse of 26 hidden greenhouses on the other side of a greenwall in this landscape (such as Butchart Gardens has), or hundreds of dedicated staff to dead head every flower past its prime. At MSP greenery is understated but lush varied and inviting.

"The task is to find some means of balancing local considerations with broader social and ecological concerns (Relph, E., 1993, p. 104)."



TACTILE

"The tactile scale is linked to everyday life by a direct encounter with things... The tactile scale is the one in which we move, in which it is required to locate ourselves with precision: to park our car, locate the stairs, and open our door... (Lassus, B., 1998, p. 66)."

Maffeo Sutton Park shows that its designers had a deep understanding of the effect of its tactile features on its guests.

I used this lens to explore the landscape and noticed one of the best indicators at my disposal was to observe the things my daughter wanted to touch. She wanted to touch the flowers, pick up the rocks pull on the vines, sit on the benches, splash in the lagoon and play on the play structures.

The tactile is the only scale in which we interact with our hands. In this scale is our best opportunity to create inviting spaces.



VISUAL

Above and beyond the tactile scale is the visual scale, a zone in which phenomena, even if they provide us with various sensations, are only visual. (Lassus, B., 1998, p. 66)."

As designers, we are predisposed to thinking dominantly in the visual scale. And while the picturesque is pleasing, this frame is fleeting, and will only hold interest for a time.

The visual scale can produce a great photo, the tactile scale can produce a great experience.

Fig. 5 Maffeo Sutton Tactile and Visual Scales (Images by Author)

This collage shows how Potteiger & Purinton observations on story (see p. 2) combined with Lassus views on scale demonstrate how the visual scale causes people pause, but the tactile scale is what encourages further inspection.



Hester's 4 Policies of Community Design

The designer is responsible to:

1. The users, and for creating socially suitable spaces
2. Incorporate user's values into the design process
3. Never confuse ethics and economics
4. Be concerned with the social suitability of both old and new aspects of the neighbourhood



Fig. 6 Maffeo Sutton Community and Culture (Images by Author)

Top left image shows an early summer event, the top right image shows Nanaimo's signature summer time event, and bottom image shows children enjoying the play structures.



With careful design and execution, Maffeo Sutton Park as it exists today exemplifies Hester's Four Policies of Community Design.

1. The users are considered first at every turn. Fig. 3 on p. 2 shows this from the very first impression, an accessible public washroom available, where the familiar sight of a full shopping cart shows that all people are being considered as patrons of this space.

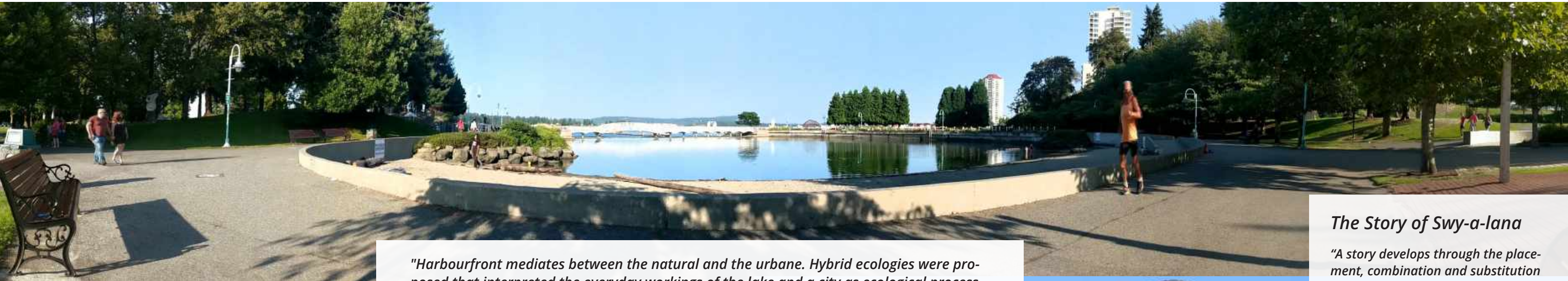
2. Nanaimo's collective values of fishing and foraging are on full display at this park, with the public fishing dock visible on fig. 4 p. 3, which extends from the south hub of the lagoon, and the mature cherry trees on the bottom right image of fig. 5 on p. 4. Nanaimo values fun and whimsy with its unique cultural events, such as the Bathtub races (pictured top right) and one of the many festivals and markets (pictured top left) as well as year round activities, in well designed play spaces for children (bottom left image) which are well enclosed and laid out for all ages.

3. A challenge of any landscape would be the tension between the powers that pay, and the people a place serves and affects. It is clear in Hester's views that the most ethical thing isn't to simply follow the wishes of the person that signs the cheques. This is where taking public forums beyond the minimum hearing requirements shows a different result. I've personally met with planners, while they are taking time out of their evenings to attend events with the public. This doesn't change the amount of money available to their projects, and it is perhaps an argument for more spaces to be city owned, because indirectly, the tax payer is the source of funding and the end user, but it takes a caring group of planners and designers to keep that in mind continuously.

4. Nanaimo as a young city cherishes its past, a walk through Maffeo Sutton shows many plaques, honouring the ships that brought its first settlers and along the harbour is the Bastion, the first building built by colonials. Swya-Lana lagoon is an emerging effort toward reintroducing our indigenous roots into our landscapes, as a vital part of our past and our future.

Maffeo Sutton Park (MSP), much like Kuwabara notes about the Toronto harbourfront, is a highly permeable space, one that naturally draws in people from their daily lives, and creating opportunity to interact with the ecological and cultural best that Nanaimo has to offer. Each area provides for a different experience, with equal parts activity and repose.

There are ambitious plans in place to connect the waterfront to the North, from MSP all the way to the Ferry and south, all the way to the Estuary, adding several kilometers to the path. This would increase the permeability of MSP immensely, as it would draw in traffic from neighbourhoods, commuters to the downtown as well as welcoming guests to the island at our key public entrance, many of whom might consider being walk on passengers, if their experience could be enjoyably continued on foot, which would greatly contribute to the sustainability and walkability of our city.



"Harbourfront mediates between the natural and the urbane. Hybrid ecologies were proposed that interpreted the everyday workings of the lake and a city as ecological process, weaving together natural, infrastructural and cultural flows (Kuwabara, 2010, p. 43)."

The Story of Swy-a-lana

"A story develops through the placement, combination and substitution of events and the other structural elements of character, agency and place. (Potteiger, Purinton, 1998, p. 137) "

When I spoke with Architect Ian Niamath about his role in designing the lagoon, he spoke of the value of creating experiences and mediating spaces. He described the waterfall that once flowed over (where planters are today) as a "sound bath" that created interest along the walking path, while creating a sound barrier between spaces.

The Swy-a-Lana Lagoon is filled with cultural value made literate (see bottom right image) exemplified by its sculptures and dedication narrating the story of the indigenous peoples. The variety of events that take place in this landscape, experiencing it in different ways, add depth to the story through activity and discourse.

And since more landscapes are shaped by environmental and cultural practices, they may not have a single author or narrator. Instead they develop from multiple and often competing groups (Potteiger, Purinton, 1998, p. 136-137)."



"The monument in Swy-a-Lana Lagoon Park depicts the narrative of Swy-a-Lana, the first Snuneymuxw person that came down from the mountains and established the Snuneymuxw people in Nanaimo. To the visitor to the city, the stone monument is a representation of the Snuneymuxw people's history built into an account of Nanaimo (2018, Stevens, p. 4)"

Fig. 7 Swy-A-Lana Lagoon, fun in the sun, sea and sky (Images by Author)

Top. Panorama of the Lagoon, from its most inland point. Shows people in all directions, enjoying life at a fast or slow pace. Bottom left: Crossing the Lagoon at an event where WildPlay, a local outdoor adventure business has set up a zipline across the Lagoon. Bottom Right: The monument to our indigenous hosts whose history on this land long predates settler culture.

Diana Krall Plaza

Diana Krall Plaza (DKP) exemplifies the absence of all the planning efforts that made MSP successful. This plaza was created unintentionally, taking shape as the awkward negative space that remained after the buildings were erected. *All of Hester's policies have been violated.* The users were not considered first, the economics clearly won out over ethics, the existing neighbourhood was ignored, and culture was clumsily added as an afterthought.

DKP lacks the intent that makes a place one of usefulness, value and culture. Relph's insight about the "instant environment machine" is evident as developers levelled the area to create buildings of economic value, and assumed that by paving the surrounding void would translate into ethical value, as though a space without intention will naturally lend itself to the community. What remains is a space that has been ridden of every trace of nature, and with it, its sense of place.

This landscape is a clear antithesis of Hough's reflections, our limitless power to shape spaces means we have also the limitless power to destroy, and create placelessness. Therefore, it is our responsibility as designers to never assume that with our great power to create change, that positive circumstances are a given, and that a place will evolve of its own accord. We must never assume that adding economic value will by consequence, create cultural value in its wake.

"In the past, there were limits to what one was able to do and the extent to which one could modify the natural environment. The constraints of environment and society created an undisputed sense of being rooted to the place, but they were, nonetheless, limitations to be overcome, not inherent motivations to be at one with nature."
(Hough, 1990, p.209)."



"Narrative need not be conceived as an explicit storyline grafted onto a site as if it were once a blank slate. Narratives are already implicit in landscapes, inscribed by natural processes and cultural practices (Potteiger, Purinton, 1998, p. 136)."

Potteiger & Purinton's observations explains another fault of this plaza. DKP was named for Diana Krall in 2008, as an attempt to give it culture, character and place. Without a true history attached to the plaza, the name has always rung hollow. The eradication of place, the lack of community input and user consideration, meant that giving this place the name of our most famous former resident, could never fix its other failures.

The result is a space that is only rarely used for its central location and paved surface. It is a victim of economic success, and the "instant environment machine", where previous character and green space were flattened, and in Hester's third policy, ethics were very much confused for economics.

Hester's first policy is completely ignored by this space, there are no creature comforts, its unfriendliness is further evidenced by its complete lack of accessibility. The zone in yellow, that surrounds the plaza has large uninviting, uninteresting stair cases that serve as restrictions rather than portals to the plaza.

This plaza is surrounded by museums, galleries, the central library, the convention centre and the theatre and the oldest living structure in Nanaimo's history, the Bastion; culture abounds this landscape, but has yet to find its way inside.

"Capable now of making or destroying environments of almost any type or scale, from sensory deprivation chambers to entire cities, modern builders have at their disposal an "instant environment machine"... a veritable panoply of technologies (Relph, 1993, p 102)."

"The chief purpose seems to be to persuade a docile population to spend money and not to worry about environmental dilution (Relph, E., 1993, p. 103)."

Fig. 8 Diana Krall Plaza Aerial Context
The plaza might primarily be considered as the zone shaded in pink, it is level with its only accessible entrance from Commercial st. The surrounding yellow shaded zone is at a lower elevation stairs are indicated with arrows.(Google Maps, 2016)



CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT-free

The neighbourhood around the plaza is full of the most important monuments to Nanaimo's history and culture. This plaza fails to be part of that culture and environment by making itself separate and sterile. The plaza is a space razed of its natural environment.

The greenery ends at every entry, the north stairs shows potential that there might be something of tactile interest in the plaza, but that's where the environment ends instead.

The Bastion and the waterfront (pictured left) are some of the most desirable and meaningful views in the city, yet this public space makes no use of them. The Military Museum and Piper Park (right) are the nearest green spaces to the plaza and are far more successful in maintaining its sense of place by honouring their natural environment, simply by resisting the urge to use the full force of the "instant environment machine".

Views and nature are "free" but to remove or obscure them completely leaves a void, a self inflicted instance of Hough's observation of the misfortune of starting from scratch.

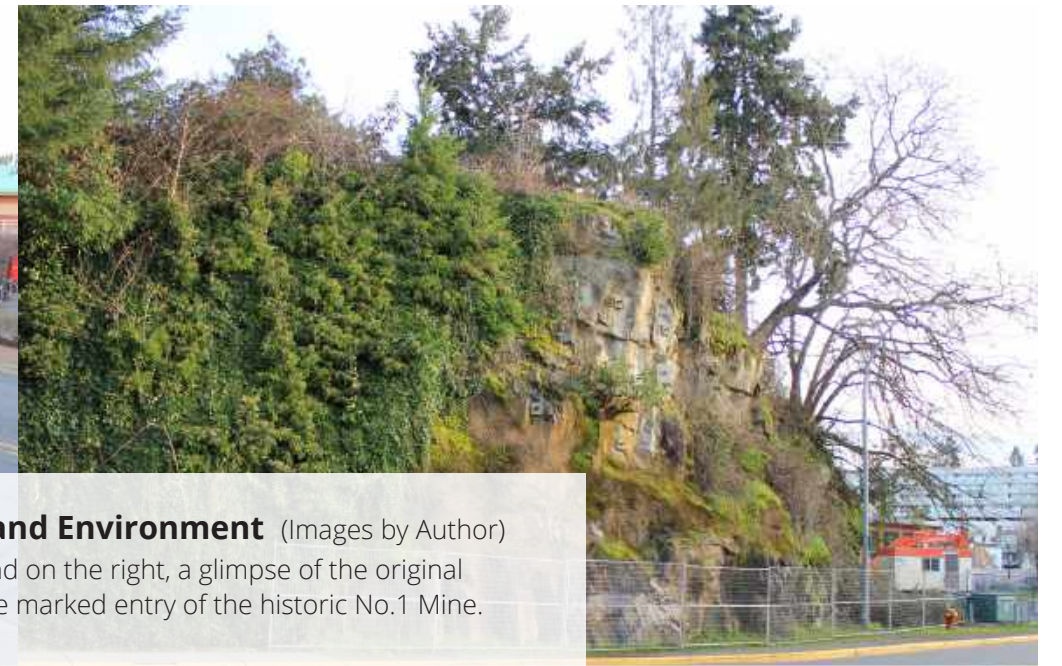


Fig. 9 Diana Krall Plaza Culture and Environment (Images by Author)
The Bastion in the distance pictured left, and on the right, a glimpse of the original landscape, the museum is placed above the marked entry of the historic No.1 Mine.



Fig. 10 Diana Krall Plaza Accessibility Assessment (Images by Author)
Left image west stairs from Wharf St. No site literacy and narrow access is unremarkable from the road. Right image south stairs beside the library, are prominent and daunting if not punishing, for all but the most able bodied.

INACCESSIBLE

There is only one entrance to this site at grade level, the most prominent and open entrance, the South West entrance from Commercial St. (See Fig. 8) which features a statue of a tuning fork and a bedded garden feature with a bench, (see p. 9) but characteristically of this space, the features are at the entrance, blocking the space instead of drawing people in. There's no hint of interest past this entrance to encourage exploration.

The left image of figure 10 shows the smaller west entrance in the distance. If you're travelling along Wharf St without turning onto Commercial, you're likely to miss this entire plaza completely.

The remainder of the site is boxed in by significant stair structures, which severely impact the permeability and flow of this landscape. This shows a lack of consideration of users. For anyone with a wheelchair or a stroller, you're better to walk around the plaza than through it, further discouraging visitors.

INHOSPITABLE

The daily users of this plaza can be divided by who passes through and who lingers. The people who move through quickly use this space as a means to an end; a short cut where their only reason for their visit is for their own economy of time and energy. Those who linger, are almost always the homeless, who choose this space not because of the comfort of the environment

8

or the compassion of its designers, but because of its

relative privacy and their desire to remain undisturbed. This further discourages inclusivity and diversity, as an increasing asymmetry of patronage continues to grow, it makes planners more cautious about how much to invest in and create the space. Stories of previous structures of a rose garden and benches placed, abused and removed are frequently referenced when the remediation of this plaza is discussed.

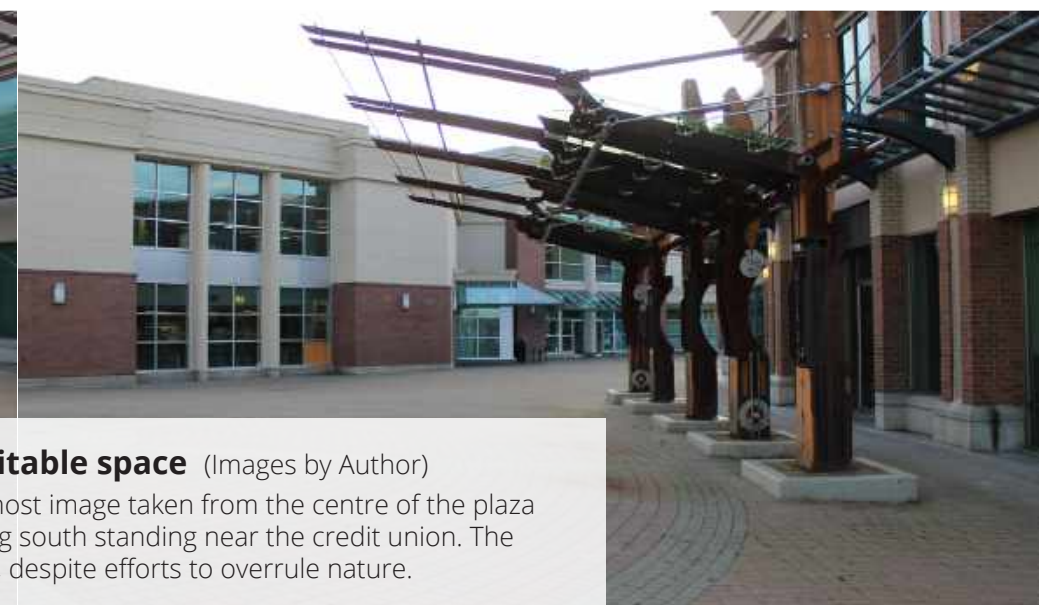
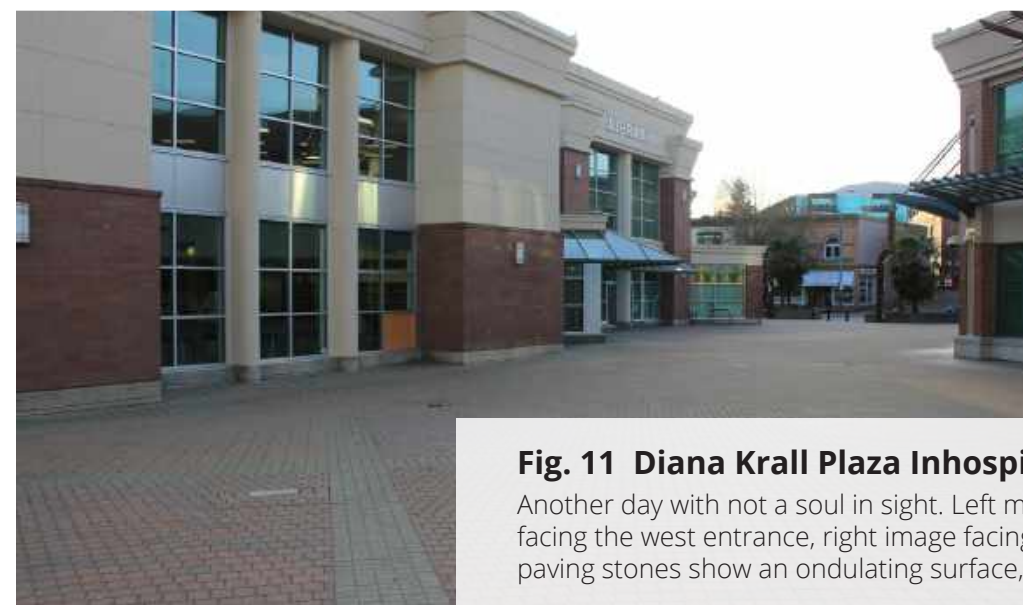


Fig. 11 Diana Krall Plaza Inhospitable space (Images by Author)
Another day with not a soul in sight. Left most image taken from the centre of the plaza facing the west entrance, right image facing south standing near the credit union. The paving stones show an undulating surface, despite efforts to overrule nature.

The Thursday Night Market at DKP

Spending time in the plaza gives a distinct feeling that it was assumed that the life within the buildings would spill out on to this space and fill it of their own accord, that the creation of a vacuum would draw in purpose and life.

The best example of life in this plaza is the newly instated, quickly adopted and widely popular Thursday Night markets. Commercial St, and Wharf St, (pictured left) as well as Museum Way (pictured right) are all closed to traffic, creating a lively pedestrian market.

The market brings life to the plaza, but as referenced on p. 7, it's only because of its paved space and central location that the plaza adds value in this event. If DKP had found its own genius loci, it would be a draw of its own accord. The vendor tents and food trucks would find other streets if the plaza was otherwise occupied, and the Thursday Night Market would see an increase in traffic to the plaza, rather than allow it to stand empty Friday to Wednesday, awaiting a coordinated event to give it value and life.

I do believe, however, that this is a step in the right direction. Programming this space will give it greater purpose, and it shows that our city expends effort to connect our community with the city itself. Steps are being made to remake this landscape, and is a major reason why I selected it for this project.

Dr. Dave Witty, PhD, RPP, FCIP, MRAIC and retired provost of VIU, is working pro bono with the MCP (Masters of Community Planning) program, and are leading a remediation effort with city support. I volunteered to join the advisory committee to learn more about how community planners view and create places. It turns out that their steps to community planning follow Hester's principles. They've reached out to all the neighbouring businesses, and presented context analyses during public hearings. Listening to the community, understanding the neighbourhood, and working pro-bono shows adherence to all 4 principles.

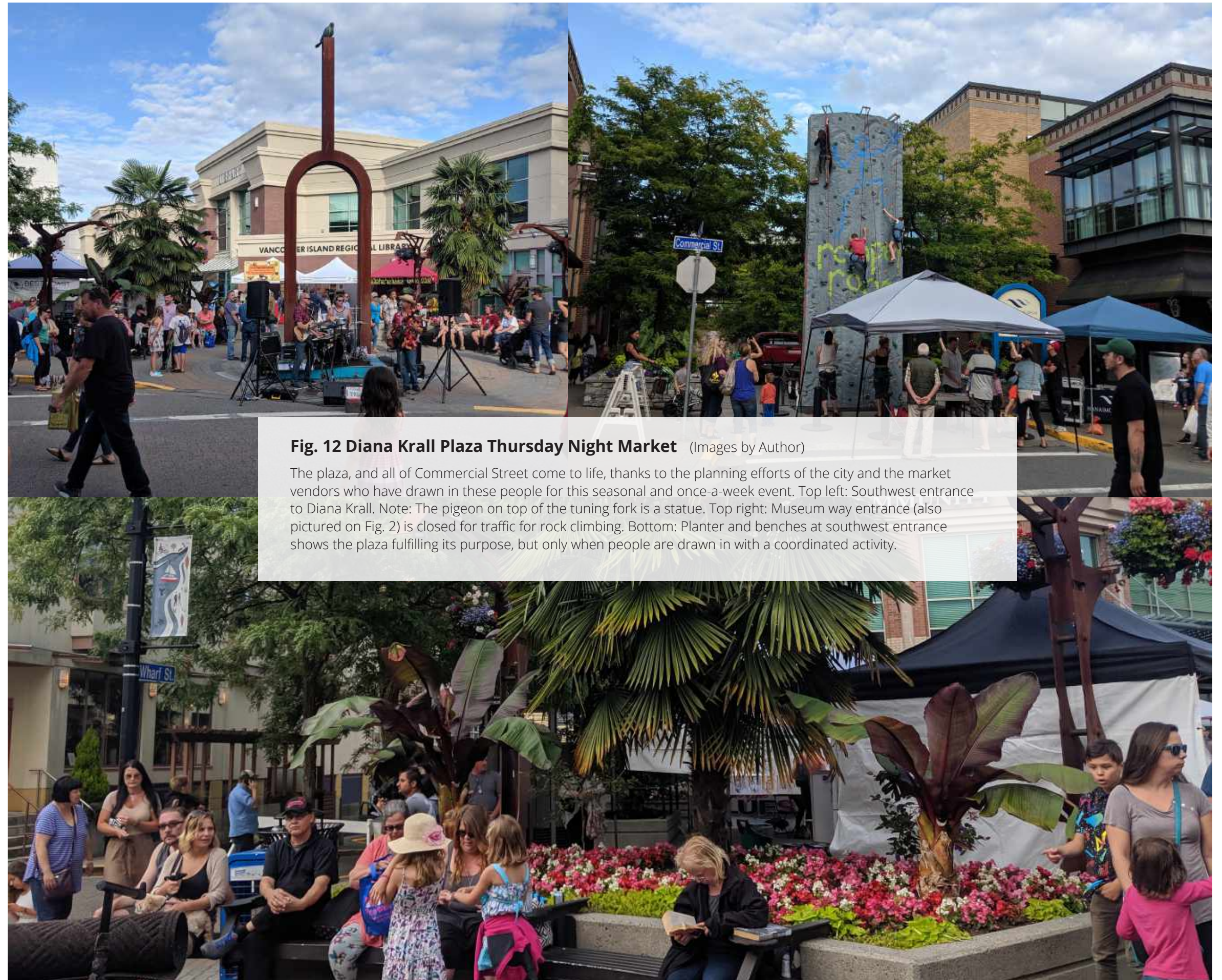


Fig. 12 Diana Krall Plaza Thursday Night Market (Images by Author)

The plaza, and all of Commercial Street come to life, thanks to the planning efforts of the city and the market vendors who have drawn in these people for this seasonal and once-a-week event. Top left: Southwest entrance to Diana Krall. Note: The pigeon on top of the tuning fork is a statue. Top right: Museum way entrance (also pictured on Fig. 2) is closed for traffic for rock climbing. Bottom: Planter and benches at southwest entrance shows the plaza fulfilling its purpose, but only when people are drawn in with a coordinated activity.

During the meetings led by Dave and his students I contemplated this site and how it might be shaped with the community focus Hester proposes, and the “economy of means” and ecological awareness of Hough, and I reflected on how this landscape would increase flow as Kuwabara describes of PFS’s work on the Toronto Harbourfront in terms of site permeability. Dave and students context maps were most enlightening in this way. The context map that most spoke to me, was the one describing anchor points and connections. DKP was lacking in anchoring features throughout, instead, the structures that bounded its entrance served to enclose it, not draw visitors inside.

The image below is my suggestion for the committee. I believe that the greatest gift we can give to our community in this space is nature, compassion and every day connection and to rebalance this environment towards ethics and the environment.

“Creating a sense of place involves a conscious decision to do so. At the same time, the need to invest in the protection of nature has never been so urgent. The connections between regional identity and the sustainability of the land are essential (Hough, 1990, p.209).”

DIANA KRALL COMMUNITY GARDEN

“Currently Diana Krall Plaza is full of potential but it’s not quite living up to it,” [VIU graphic design] student Nigel Neufeld said. “While we feel an art wall would definitely liven up the location, a community garden has the potential to turn the plaza into a hub.” (Sterritt, 2019)



Fig. 13 Author’s Concept for the DKP Community Garden
Planters can be placed against walls to support climbing vines, moveable picnic tables for lunches and outdoor events, meetings, and learning opportunities. Planters of all shapes and sizes can be planted, and changed over time and with experience.

I’ve long been a proponent of using an “economy of means” as Hough put it so aptly. When thinking towards doing the maximum environmental and social good, at minimal cost and intervention, the community garden seemed to be the simplest answer to create the greatest impact.

Cedar planter boxes are inexpensive, and inpermanent. They can be built by local professionals or students., or even donated individually by businesses looking to take part. They can be moved, removed and reimagined with little disruption. When I brought this idea to the committee, Dave referenced how “porta-parks” can be used to “activate a site” ahead of longer term permanent planning (Dave Witty, personal conversation, 2020 Mar 12).

“Doing as little as possible, or economy of means, involves the idea that from minimum resources and energy, maximum environmental and social benefits are available (Hough, 1990, p. 211).”

There is a well known shift occurring, where more people than ever live in cities. It is incredibly important for sustainability and educating our youth, that we incorporate nature, and agriculture into our city centres. If cities aren’t built in a way that connects us to the nature that supports us, we will continue to destroy our environment unknowingly, while unconsciously teaching our children to do the same. A centrally located community garden, where schools adopt the care of a plant, a fruit tree, or a vegetable garden, will create a link to nature that will be remembered, and tied to the primacy of our need for food.

“... the once-a-year visit to the country to “educate” urban children in nature lore, do little to engender or deepen knowledge of the environment, or more importantly, to encourage environmental values. There are more likely to come from understanding the places that are close to home (Hough, 1990, p. 210).”

It was encouraging to see upon further research, that I wasn’t the first to present this idea. Graphic design students sought to create murals along with the gardens. This pictorial above is my own, and further to the idea of gardens, my thoughts are to simply add picnic tables, and that this might be a place to eat lunches, or take breaks, share food with others and garden as a community.

By adding green spaces, places to rest and a tactile environment to experience, this plaza has the potential to help support the community in many ways. Challenges such as misuse of the gardens are of course a risk, however the removing anything of social value has already proven not to be a viable solution.

What is shocking to me, is how many authors from decades ago saw the danger of "impending ecological collapse" yet landscapes such as DKP are hardly uncommon. We are more concerned with liability than compassion. A free food garden seems like a threat to the economy, but I contend the opposite. It would be a chance to bring people together, who might eat an apple from the garden but then go for a coffee or buy a sandwich.

A free food garden has the potential to inspire the next generation of gardeners, and feed a family that might have been tight on funds that month, while absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

"... values that espouse a truly sustainable future will only emerge when it is perceived that there are no alternatives. It is possible that over time the fragility of earth's. life systems will create an imperative for survival on which a new ethics can flourish (Hough, 1990, p.209)."

**VANCOUVER ISLAND
REGIONAL LIBRARY**

"Place is one of the truly central concerns of any time, but particularly so in these times of global shifts, cultural unrest and impending ecological collapse (Paterson, D, 2010, p. 89)."

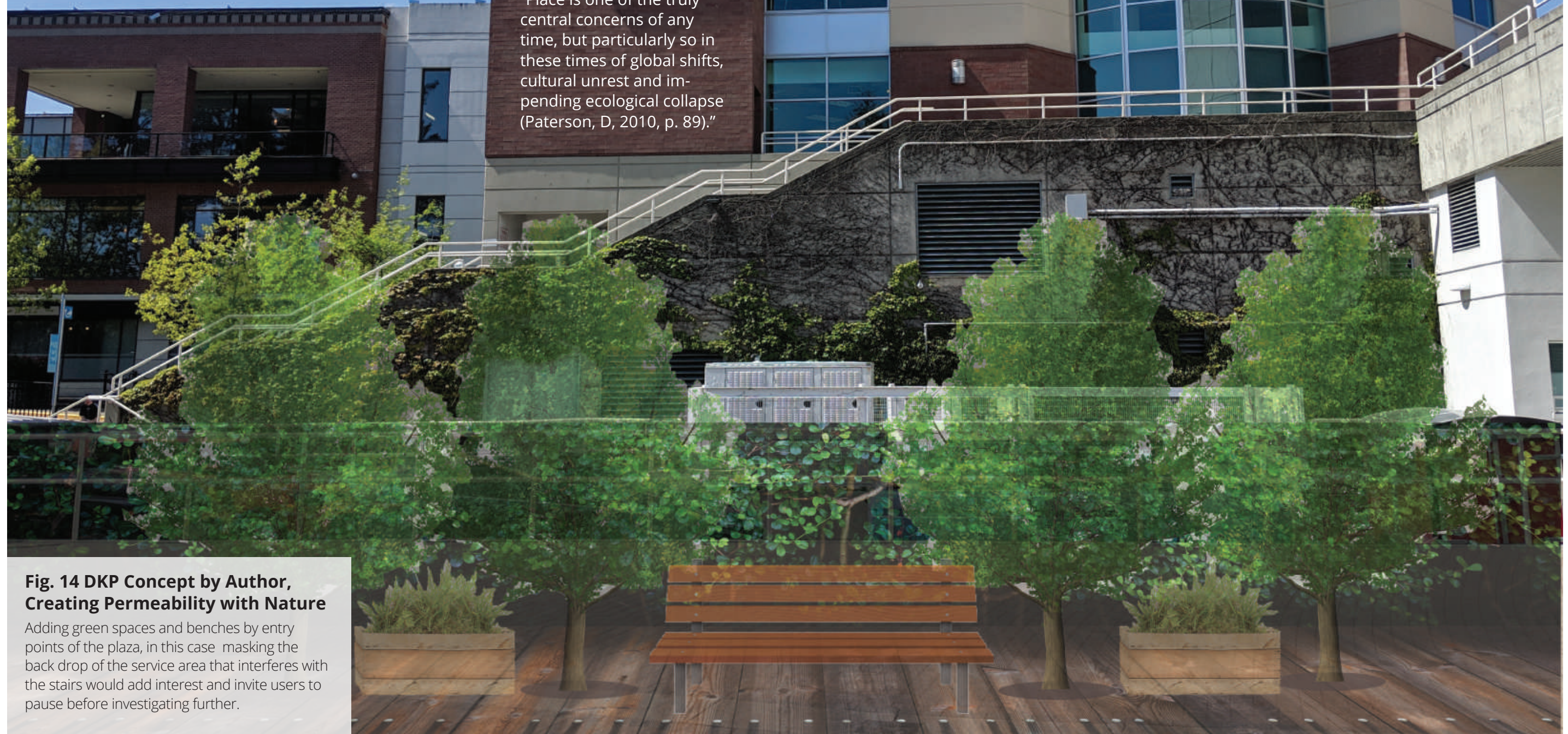


Fig. 14 DKP Concept by Author, Creating Permeability with Nature

Adding green spaces and benches by entry points of the plaza, in this case masking the back drop of the service area that interferes with the stairs would add interest and invite users to pause before investigating further.

SUMMARY

“Sustainable landscapes are central to the regional imperative. Sustainability involves, among other things, the notion that human activity and the technological systems can contribute to the health of the environments and natural systems from which they draw benefit (Hough, 1990, p. 211).”

This project led me to dig deep into my own beliefs about urban and public settings, and who we are as a diverse community. Culture grows out of the a city’s epicentre, and it’s the duty of those public spaces to honour and accept the culture that made its existence possible. However, a tension emerges from this space. Where there is a density of people, there is economic value to be had, so the user, the governing body and private interests become locked in a battle.

If private interests outweigh the public need, a landscape like the current DKP emerges. However we can see in MSP, when the balance between users’ needs and public funds is struck, private sector interests are limited to donations in return for marketing through dedicated benches, named plaques, sculptures, sponsored events etc., The tension between these otherwise competing interests can be held in balance.

The careful placement of this Public Urban Collection, after the Historical and the Ecological collections is not lost on me. The public urban landscape must reflect both the cultural identity of its place, which can only evolve through time and experience, and incorporate the ecology and environment, reminding us that we a part of nature, not above or beyond it. To forget this critical self knowledge of our place on this planet is what has led us to our systemic destruction of it. Our urban environments stand to have the greatest impact on our society and are the key to building sustainability. Merging ecology and culture might be the only way to build the sustainable world that humanity needs to continue to thrive on this planet.

This study has led me to exploring other Urban Food Forests to learn from their successes and challenges. I’ve joined the Nanaimo Food Share Society, and contacted the leader of the Stone Soup movement in Nanaimo, and I will continue to take part as an advisor on the DKP revitalization committee which will present its plans in late 2020.

REFERENCES

Corner, J., 1991, Theory in Crisis. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 20–22).

Hester, R., 1974. Community Design. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 49–56).

Hough, M., 1990, Principles for Regional Design. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 209–213).

Kuwabara, B., n.d., Landscape into Urbanism. In McKinnon, K., (Ed.), 2010,. Grounded: the work of Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg. Vancouver: Blueimprint (pp. 20-22).

Lassus, B., 1998, The Obligation of Invention. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 64–78).

Maffeo Sutton Park Improvement Plan. (n.d.). Retrieved February 14, 2020, from <https://www.nanaimo.ca/your-government/projects/projects-detail/maffeo-sutton-park-improvement>

McKinnon, K., & Valkenburgh, M. V. (2010). Grounded: the work of Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg. Vancouver: Blueimprint, pp 40-51.

Nanaimo Community Archives. Map of the Nanaimo Harbour (7, Dec, 1965). Nanaimo Community Archives.

Paterson, D., n.d., Place, Body, Memory. In McKinnon, K., (Ed.), 2010,. Grounded: the work of Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg. Vancouver: Blueimprint (pp. 88-90).

Potteiger, M., Purinton, J., 1998, Landscape Narratives. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 136–144).

Relph, E., 1993, Place Reclamation. In S. Swaffield (Ed.), Theory in Landscape Architecture: A Reader (pp. 102–104).

Sterritt, S. (2019, April 16). VIU students bring new plan to brighten downtown Nanaimo. Retrieved March 8, 2020, from <https://nanaimonewsnow.com/2019/04/16/viu-students-bring-new-plan-to-brighten-downtown-nanaimo/>

Stevens, J. (2018, May 19). More than just a City’s History: Narratives of the Elimination of Indigenous Histories in the Settler Colonial Objectives of the Historian in Nanaimo, British Columbia . Retrieved March 7, 2020, from <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/undergraduateresearch/52966/items/1.0366979>

FIGURES

Figure 1. Overview Map

Source: “Downtown Nanaimo.” 49°10’06.85” N and 123°56’10.72” W. Google Earth. 19 August 2016. Accessed 15 February 2020, annotated by Author.

Figure 2. Diana Krall Plaza Museum Way and Commercial St. Entrance

(Image by Author)

Figure 3. Maffeo Sutton Main Entrance

(Image by author)

Figure 4. Maffeo Sutton Park Aerial

Source: “Downtown Nanaimo.” 49°10’06.85” N and 123°56’10.72” W. Google Earth. 19 August 2016. Accessed 15 February 2020, annotated by Author.

Figure 5. Maffeo Sutton Tactile and Visual Scales

(Images by Author)

Figure 6. Maffeo Sutton Community and Culture

(Images by author)

Figure 7. Swy-A-Lana Lagoon, fun in the sun, sea and sky

(Images by Author)

Figure 8. Diana Krall Plaza Aerial Context

Source: “Downtown Nanaimo.” 49°10’06.85” N and 123°56’10.72” W. Google Earth. 19 August 2016. Accessed 15 February 2020, annotated by Author.

Figure 9. Diana Krall Plaza Culture and Environment

(Images by Author)

Figure 10. Diana Krall Plaza Accessibility Assessment

(Image by author)

Figure 11. Diana Krall Plaza Inhospitable Space

(Image by author)

Figure 12. Diana Krall Plaza Thursday Night Market

(Image by author)

Figure 13. Author’s Concept for the Diana Krall Plaza Community Garden

(Image by author)

Figure 14. DKP Concept by Author, Creating Permeability with Nature

(Image by author)