Life On The Edge:
A Public Space Vision for False Creek Flats

by
Michael Enns

B.Sc. University of Victoria, 1997

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
IN
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
October, 2003
© Michael Enns, 2003
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of **Landscape Architecture**

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Date **Oct. 10th, 2007**
ABSTRACT

This project will explore public space design possibilities for one of Vancouver's major geomorphologic landscape edges: the Clark Drive escarpment and the East False Creek Flats. Once a tidal wetland that formed the eastern margins of False Creek, the area has been home to industrial and rail operations for the last century. In recent years, widespread interest for these lands has emerged in the face of changing land-use zoning and development opportunities. Increasingly, these interests are being translated into large-scale 'big box' business and commercial developments. It is argued, however, that an area such as this, one of great physical prominence in the heart of the urban social fabric with a unique blend of aesthetic and experiential potentials, must be planned and prioritized through a scope of social interaction and public spaces.

A literature review on theories of urban landscape edges provides the initial ideological thrust of the project. Second, an examination of the City's public open space planning policies is compared with an overview of existing uses of Vancouver's major geomorphologic edges to discern possible connections between how we perceive our city and how we plan for it. In response, the role of these edges in a diversified public open space system is expanded upon using one of these geomorphologic edges, specifically the Clark Drive escarpment and East False Creek Flats, as a vision for social interaction. A detailed portion of this larger site is then the focus of a more intimate series of design interventions.

The conclusions drawn herein offer insight into the nature of successful public places, ones that are strategically located, contextually responsive, highly used, and multifunctional. It is also recognized that great public places must function at a multitude of scales, as both centres for local activities and as components of larger wholes. Moreover, how we plan and prioritize for public open space is crucial not only to the success of the many individual places in and of themselves, but also to the success of the larger region in its ability to install in its users a strong sense of place and identity.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
Table of Contents iii
List of Figures v
Acknowledgements vii

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Thesis Statement, Goals, Objectives and Process 3
   1.2.1 Thesis Statement/Hypothesis 3
   1.2.2 Project Goals 3
   1.2.3 Project Objectives 3
   1.2.4 The Design Process 3
1.3 Deliverables 4

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION
2.1 Understanding the Image of a City 5
   2.1.1 Imageability 5
   2.1.2 Edges in the Landscape 6
   2.1.3 Urban Edges 7
2.2 Understanding the Image of Vancouver 9
   2.2.1 A Setting Looking For A City 9
   2.2.2 Edge Perception 11
   2.2.3 Opportunities For Enhancement 12
2.3 Understanding City Approaches 15
   2.3.1 Towards Vancouver's Public Open Space System 15
2.4 Summary 16

CHAPTER 3: SITE ANALYSIS
3.1 Introducing the Site 17
   3.1.1 Existing Content 17
   3.1.2 Historical Context 18
3.2 Examining the Larger Context 20
   3.2.1 Infrastructure, Aesthetic Attitude, Problems/Barriers 20
   3.2.2 Political Framework and Development Interests 23
3.3 Site Analysis 25
   3.3.1 Existing Site Structure and Forms 25
   3.3.2 Site Character 26

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN FRAMEWORK
4.1 Structural Studies 28
   4.1.1 VCC Expansion 28
   4.1.2 Finning Research Centre and Station 29
   4.1.3 An Emerging Community 29
   4.1.4 Establishing a Public Open Space System 30
4.2 Strategies for Design 30
4.3 General Programme Arguments 31
4.4 Conceptual Plan: A Vision for East False Creek Flats 32

CHAPTER 5: A DESIGN PROPOSAL
5.1 Design Brief 33
5.1.1 Rationale

5.2 Program Objectives
5.2.1 Improve Connectivity
5.2.2 Enhance the Views
5.2.3 Heal the Site
5.2.4 Celebrate the Process of Making
5.2.5 Establish a Place for the City to Gather

5.3 Design Precedents

5.4 Materials Palette

5.5 Design Expression
5.3.1 Iron Reed Civic Park
5.3.2 Ways In, Ways Out
5.3.3 Grandview SkyTrain Plaza
5.3.4 The Estuary and The Reedbed
5.3.5 The Graffiti Workshop and The MudFlats
5.3.6 The Roundhouse Celebration Grounds

CHAPTER 6: FINALE
6.1 Summary of Design Implications
6.2 Conclusion

BIBLIOGRAPHY
# LIST OF FIGURES

## THEORETICAL ORIENTATION
1. Outline Map of the Boston Peninsula 5
2. The Visual Form of Boston As Seen in the Field 6
3. The Boston That Everyone Knows 6
4. Edges come in all shapes and sizes, and function in as many ways as they are perceived 8
5. The *image* of Vancouver 9
6. Three realities of Vancouver 10
7. Major geomorphic edges of Vancouver 11
8. A dead-end street along Arbutus Ridge 14
9. Lagoon Drive 14
10. Beatty St. escarpment 14
11. Beatty St. escarpment 14
12. Clark Drive escarpment 14
13. Clark Drive escarpment 14

## SITE ANALYSIS
14. The study site in various contexts 17
15. Historic Context 19
16. existing land-use, zoning, major streets and landmarks 20
17. Understanding the aesthetic attitude of the larger area 21
18. abrupt edges 22
19. poor drainage 22
20. barriers to movement 22
21. vehicular pollution 22
22. “Big Boxes” 23
23. poor location 23
24. dominating forms 23
25. The City’s structure plan for the False Creek Flats, juxtaposed against some of the relevant “players” in the area and the issues they represent. 23
26. Existing Site Structure 25
27. A photo collage of the character of East False Creek Flats and the Clark Drive escarpment

## DESIGN FRAMEWORK
28. Location of structural studies 28
29. General programmatic arguments for the east False Creek Flats 31
30. East False Creek Flats Concept Plan 32

## A DESIGN PROPOSAL
31. The detailed design site 33
32. Design precedents 37
33. Materials palette 39
34. A spirited approach 40
35. **Iron Reed Civic Park, East False Creek Flats: master plan of the park**  
36. **The Grand Staircase**  
37. **Keith Drive Entrance**  
38. **4th Avenue Descent**  
39. **Keith Drive Commercial Area**  
40. **Central Valley Greenway extension**  
41. **Grandview Plaza and Clark Drive Bridge Pedestrian Underpass**  
42. **Clark Drive Bridge and VCC Pedestrian Tunnel**  
43. **View of Iron Reed Civic Park From Clark Drive Bridge**  
44. **The ‘Reedbed’ Constructed Wetland**  
45. **Bath House and Sauna**  
46. **Weir system and pump house**  
47. **The Info Box exhibit center**  
48. **The Info Box**  
49. **The Graffiti Workshop**  
50. **Public bench**  
51. **Water Wall**  
52. **The Mudflats**  
53. **The Mud Bowl**  
54. **Roundhouse Celebration Grounds**  
55. **Roundhouse Celebration Grounds**  
56. **Public Arcway and Parade Route**  
57. **Vision for the Vancouver Festival of Industrial Design**  
58. **Event-specific Stage and Exhibit area**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee members for all their time and effort throughout the preparation of this thesis, as well as the many people who assisted me in researching this project. Martin Lewis, UBC Architecture Program, has been an inspiration to me for years, and was a valuable source of wisdom and guidance in matters of formal design and programming. Tilo Driessen, City of Vancouver Planning, had endless ideas and feedback on my work, and challenged me to expand design proposals further. Together, their patience and general interest in the project topic and location was greatly appreciated, and for that, I am indebted to them.

Above all, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Doug Paterson, director of the UBC Landscape Architecture Program, whose support consistently went well beyond what is expected of a project supervisor. Over the course of the program, Doug has been an inspiration to me as an enthusiastic teacher with a great appreciation of working with students. I consider myself very fortunate to have benefited from Doug's intellect, perspective and energy. During the last year, Doug has pushed me to new understandings of urban programming and formal design, and for that I am forever in debt.

I would also like to extend my respect and gratitude to my classmates, friends and family, whose unbelievable energy and optimism supported me in so many ways throughout the last few years.
CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

"We exist in a society of change and fragmentation. We experience a fragmentation of self, of society and social relations and certainly of our public realm. This fragmentation at many levels of society has an incredible impact on our public urban landscape and on our public values". (Quayle et al. 1992)

Much has been written and said in recent years about the declining state of public life in general. People spend less time outdoors. The trust and friendliness between neighbors has been replaced by caution and skepticism in our current culture of fear. Our mental state and emotional stability is increasingly reliant on a media-saturated world in which our values, ideals and beliefs are determined for us in 30-second windows. Even our landscapes, in constant competition with corporate dominance and designer arrogance, are becoming superficial versions of anywhere and everywhere. Wherever we look, symbols help us make decisions, pictures help set our ideals, and words tell us how to prioritize our thoughts. Quayle notes, "Public places, wonderful opportunities for integration and cohesion, are subject to the same fragmentation afflicting us all. As a result, public places often tend to be neglected and confused" (Quayle et al. 1992). Sadly, the imagination and energy that once inspired public places to be vibrant spaces full of possibilities have become dulled responses to the limited value systems that created them. We must return to the notion of what makes good place!

At various scales, certain landscape experiences must be maintained or even enhanced in order to foster a sense of place and enrich our value systems. These experiences are dialectical poles, and, ideally, operate on a circular continuum between the opposites of the dialectic relationship (Paterson 2001). Some have particular relevance to this project: (adapted from Paterson Lecture 2001):

- **The experience of being located**: people have a fundamental need to be oriented in space (ie. here/there; above/below)
- **The experience of relationships**: to perceive contrasts and comparisons (ie. formal/informal)
- **The experience of time**: our understanding of place in the passage of time (ie. past/future)
- **Personal experience**: our sense of our various societies (ie. public/private)
- **The experience of being conscious and unconscious**: different people perceive things differently (ie. center/whole)
- **Sensual experience**: all feelings become relative to others (ie. soft/firm; noisy/quiet)

As dialectics are culturally bound, understanding one opposite is crucial to the definition and understanding of the other. Taken collectively, they represent an awareness of what an individual (or society) wants in a range of circumstances; exposed, they reveal a grand spectrum of imagination and opportunity; understood, they increase the demand and desire for realizing the potential of place.

Likewise, accentuating prepositional possibilities can strengthen our sense of place identity—what makes a place unique within its larger context. How we describe one place relative to another is dependent on our prepositional selection (Paterson 2001). Different descriptions of the Grandview area, for instance, can produce different attitudes towards it and its position in the larger city: a *here/there* prepositional approach beckons a political-socioeconomic...
understanding of discrepancies between east Vancouver and the city's west side; an above/below comparison between Grandview and False Creek Flats involves considerations of their respective positions and functions in space relative to one another, or the ecological flows between the two. Each one fosters its own set of attitudes and responses towards Grandview and the larger city, and of the experience of being there. Acknowledging that both of these prepositions, as well as others, exist and play a dominant role in our sense of the place is a vital component in the process of planning for public open space.

Taken together, dialectic and prepositional relationships are effective and engaging forays into the understanding of what makes places great – paying less attention to environmental form and more attention to environmental relationships. These relationships between place and its users can be expressed in many forms, and as noted by Quayle, have been altered by various means: technology and the culture of conformity and compliance; the connection between sustainability and ecological literacy; lack of visions of publicness and privateness; the uncertain ethical basis of public life; and the poor relationship between education and place (Quayle et al. 1992). The inherent challenge for planners and designers is to mend these sub-relationships we have with the landscape – our education, visions, ethics, values and attitudes – in order to re-establish the fundamental relationship we have with all great places: the feeling of total and complete involvement and belonging to a particular place or region.

Nonetheless, creating great public spaces, ones that are strategically located, contextually responsive, highly used, and multi-functional, is not an easy task. Nor should it be. After all, these are the spaces in which a society may come together in an increasingly desensitized world to socialize, interact, recreate and celebrate. In fact, a series of public spaces, in a multitude of forms and functions, can alter the way people move in the landscape, how they use it, how they perceive it, and how they understand it. Undoubtedly, a public open space system is a crucial component in determining our sense of place. The two are invariably linked, and it is this relationship between the organization of the urban public realm and society's responses and emotions to it that forms the platform upon which this project has examined the City of Vancouver.
1.2 THESIS STATEMENT, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS

The following section outlines the goals and objectives of the current thesis in view of the ideological framework discussed in the introduction. The process by which these goals and objectives are reached is summarized, as is the resultant 'output', or products of the thesis.

1.2.1 Thesis Statement
Preserving Vancouver’s major geomorphic landscape edges for public open space is essential to the development of this city’s imageability and identity. More specifically, the East False Creek Flats and Clark Drive escarpment constitute an area within the city that offers a unique blend of views, attitudes and experiences within what is emerging as a dynamic social and political environment. It is crucial to local communities as well as the larger urban fabric that this area is not only prioritized for a range of public and private uses, but that it is anchored by a central space that accentuates its ecological, experiential and social attributes for the entire city to inhabit and enjoy.

1.2.2 Project Goal
The goal of this project is to demonstrate the importance of Vancouver’s major geomorphic landscape edges to the City’s overall identity and public open space system, and to propose a public open space vision for an existing urban edge that accommodates local needs and attitudes, elaborates on experiential possibilities, and represents the function of this edge within the context of the larger city.

1.2.3 Project Objectives
1. To preserve the urban geomorphic landscape edge as a relevant component of a city’s public open space functioning and overall identity;
2. To examine the major geomorphic edges within Vancouver, emphasizing scale, contrast, accessibility and use;
3. To compare and contrast Vancouver’s existing public open space planning approaches towards our major urban geomorphic edges and the contribution of these edges to the image of the city.
4. To utilize an existing geomorphic edge in Vancouver, the Clark Drive Escarpment, as a canvas for a public open space vision;
5. To develop this edge into a successful, vibrant and diversified place for the betterment of local communities as well as the larger urban realm.

1.2.4 The Design Process
1. Explore the nature of Vancouver’s imageability:
   a. Analyze the existing image of Vancouver and identify the reasons for this interpretation;
   b. Conduct a literature review of the significance of urban landscape edges in contributing to place identity and public open space;
   c. Examine Vancouver City planning approaches to major landscape edges as a function of our public open space system.
2. Select a geomorphic landscape edge within Vancouver to be critically analyzed through the process of design:
   a. Identify the Clark Drive Escarpment and east False Creek Flats as project site;
   b. Conduct detailed analysis, observations, sketches, photo documentation and lived experiences throughout the Grandview/False Creek Flats area by car and foot at various times of day;
   c. Map the site in context of the existing structure, aesthetic attitude, experiential orientation and political framework of the larger urban fabric;
d. Map the Clark Drive escarpment/East False Creek Flats area for site character, forms, structure, uses, drainage, habitat, views, developments, possibilities and experiences;

e. Speculate on various development scenarios utilizing structural studies;

f. Establish a preliminary set of instructions, or general program arguments, that will guide and inform design decisions at various scales;

g. Develop a conceptual plan of the East False Creek Flats.

3. Pursue the design of a detailed portion of the site:

a. Generate a rich inventory of character and materials;

b. Specify crucial objectives for the area and develop a detailed site program;

c. Review precedents in the landscape that address similar design issues or explore similar creative solutions;

d. Evaluate various options for site structure, layout and form;

e. Finalize detailed design solutions at an appropriate range of scales and for a diversified range of experiences;

f. Document conclusions and findings.

1.3 DELIVERABLES

This thesis provides a series of creative and provocative design interventions based on the detailed design process described previously. The modes of expression for design were as follows:

1. A series of photomontages and analytical maps to help convey the nature, character and attitude of the site at various scales, as well as exposing the decision-making process taken throughout the course of the design;

2. A series of conceptual sketches in plan of structural studies exploring various potential scenarios that may occur in the area;

3. A concept plan of East False Creek Flats that represents the main design objectives in its vision and spatial organization;

4. A master plan of the detailed site that illustrates the main programmatic and structural components of Iron Reed Civic Park;

5. Detailed plans that illustrate the potential function and use of specific spaces within the park;

6. A collection of detailed section-elevations that illustrate spatial relationships and design responses to various components within the park;

7. A series of perspective sketches that reveal the experiential intentions behind various designs;

8. A series of design details that describe a more intimate connection between program and function, while offering insight into the nature of the materials palette;

2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE IMAGE OF A CITY

2.1.1 Imageability

"Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all."

Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City*

In the classic text "Image of the City", author and well-known urban planner Kevin Lynch looks for physical qualities that relate to the identity and structure of the mental image. He defines imageability as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer." (Lynch 1960). "It is the shape, color, or arrangement" Lynch continues, "which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment." (Lynch 1960). Lynch studied various large cities in this context, comparing perceived spatial organization with actual structure and form, and discovers that a city's imageability is often a distorted version of reality (see Figures 1-3). In every city, Lynch learned, certain elements physically or visually stand out amongst others, thereby skewing an individual's perception in favor of those prominent features. Based on his findings, Lynch comprised a basic list of elements that contribute to the image of any city: the

![Figure 1: Outline Map of the Boston Peninsula](image_of_the_city)
paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. How people move through the landscape, experience it, and ultimately, understand it, is largely dependent on our perceptions of these elements, he argued. This project focuses on the notion of landscape edges, not only as crucial components of a city's imageability, but also as priority for public open space design.

2.1.2 Edges in the Landscape

The bulk of the work reviewed and researched for this paper generally interprets edges in the landscape as zones of transition. Whether the context is rural or urban, the concept of landscape edge is consistently explained as an important link between two adjacent landscape spaces, an area that plays an important role in the overall functioning of the greater landscape. Landscapes do not exist in isolation; each one has a context, a locale and regional setting that offers experiences to those who use and move through it at all scales. The edges of landscapes, the places where flora, fauna, processes and landforms interact and overlap, are products of movement and distribution of living and non-living things.
To summarize the bulk of work reviewed and researched for this project, edges are:

- transition zones between two landscapes; a median space that sits between two sides (Landscape Ecology)
- naturally places of high activity and diversity (Edge Theory);
- reveal the nature of a place and how the landscape is layered through physical processes and transformations (e.g. water courses, topography);
- places that may give physical and visual context within a larger system (e.g. views help establish a "sense of place", linking experiences at large and small scales)
- are places that educate us about the history of a place; understanding relationships between past, present, and future (e.g. how land-use boundaries have evolved over time);
- organize and shape our image of a city; holding together generalized areas for reference and orientation (e.g. shoreline, ridge).

2.1.2 Urban Edges

Within most of this reviewed work, planners and urban strategists have examined the concept of landscape edges through an ecological or economic lens. These are, without question, credible approaches to any land management analysis. However, comparatively few theorists have attempted to understand the role of edges as vital 'places' within an urban public open space system (Paterson 2001).

Nonetheless, there are those who have attempted to forge an evolution of new ideas of city form and function. In his renowned book A Pattern Language, Christopher Alexander emphasizes the importance of edges to public spaces. "The life of a public square", Alexander stresses, "forms naturally around its edge. If the edge fails, then the space never becomes lively." (Alexander et al., 1977). Jane Jacobs, in her novel Life and Death of Great American Cities, observes the decayed nature of many inner city edges and the physical and functional effects of borders on their immediate city surroundings (Jacobs 1969). Similarly, the aforementioned work of Kevin Lynch includes edges as one of the vital components to a city's imageability in his classic text The Image of the City. Collectively, these authors and others have shed light on the significance of urban edges in the merging of city 'as place' with city 'as form'.

Edges in the urban realm exist in many shapes and sizes, and function in as many ways as they are perceived (Figure 4). Large-scale geomorphic edges, the focus of this project, are the lines, wrinkles and cracks on the urban surface, underneath which lies the city's soul. To the city-dweller, they are the shorelines, escarpments, boundaries, walls, and ridges; to the image of the city, they are reference points to which the majority of experiences stem from.
The perceived function of an edge is largely dependent on the relationship between the two sides. Relative size and scale is one way to express this relationship. For example, a zone of transition in a city for a squirrel may be the entrance to a small hole in a building wall, a threshold of exposure and concealment; for a homeless person, it may be a public shelter near a private townhouse development, a threshold of alienation and acceptance; for a city planner, it may be a line on a municipal master plan where a residential neighborhood brushes up against a major park, a land-use threshold of public and private worlds – the sizes and scale of edges are simply endless. Moreover, the level of contrast perceived between two adjacent landscapes (e.g. texture, pattern, color, topography, land-use etc.) often determines the importance, role, or function attributed to a certain edge. This perception can change dramatically depending on the size and scale of the edge experienced by the user, as well as the level of visual and physical accessibility of that edge. For instance, most people can easily identify the significance of a large and highly accessible physical edge such as a shoreline, but may ignore the importance of a socio-economic residential edge in a city between high and low income neighborhoods. As such, understanding the contribution of urban landscape edges to the image of any city must be done through a speculative assessment of their size and scale, their level of contrast, their level of public accessibility and their perceived level of significance within the context of the urban public realm.
2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE IMAGE OF VANCOUVER

"A vivid and integrated physical setting, capable of producing a sharp image, plays a social role as well. It can furnish the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication"

Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City*

2.2.1 A Setting Looking For A City

In Vancouver, a young, waterfront city with a majestic natural setting and endless recreational opportunities, the city is highly successful at enhancing public accessibility and activity along the shore line, taking full advantage of its unique location on the Pacific coast. Vancouverites, generally, are quite content to be living, working and playing in one of the world's most liveable cities.

![Image of Vancouver](image.png)

*Figure 5: The image of Vancouver: shore-line, English Bay, Kits Beach, Stanley Park, mountains, Lions Gate, False Creek, Science World, Burrard Inlet, Coal Harbour, Canada Place, Lost Lagoon*

However, while much of the planning and prioritization of the city's open space remains focused on Vancouver-the-external-setting, the internal life and energy of Vancouver-the-city goes comparatively untapped when it comes to accentuating prominent geomorphic forms for the public realm. As such, various edges with great potential and opportunity to contribute to the overall image of Vancouver are often ignored or neglected. In reality, many fundamental components to this city's *imageability* are often narrow in scope, lacking in imagination, context, and common sense. Vancouver is indeed "a setting looking for a city" (Figure 5).

Lynch’s notion of imageability, as a biased representation of perception based on our experiences with prominent features in the landscape, holds true for Vancouver. If Vancouverites were to draw a mental map of the city, most would likely have intimate knowledge of the outline of the city from a combination of Burrard Inlet, Stanley Park peninsula, False Creek, Point Grey, and the North Arm of the Fraser River (Figure 6). This is not surprising, as our city's shoreline is the largest, most prominent and accessible edge that we experience at any scale. It defines the city, and everyone relates to it. It allows users to interact with each other and the immediate landscape, as well as revealing dialectic and prepositional relationships that give us a sense of place within a larger context. Some Vancouverites, perhaps those more familiar with Vancouver's internal structure, may identify a few of the high-contrast zones within the city, such as the south edge of Stanley Park adjacent to the West End or the western edge of the city proper against Pacific Spirit Regional Park.
Others may speak of the visual and physical experiences inherent on the escarpments that sandwich the False Creek Flats, hover over Burrard Inlet, or rise above English Bay on the city's west side. Similarly, some people moving through the city may observe the district edges that separate socio-economic and cultural areas within Vancouver, such as portions of Main Street that divide low income housing from more affluent neighborhoods. Regardless of scale of experience, these edges should be highly identifiable and accessible as definitive orienting landscape forms to help define the image of Vancouver for its dwellers. To accomplish this, we must integrate them into our public open space system, individually as unique and diversified places, and collectively as a positive and prominent attribute of the larger urban fabric.

Figure 6: Three realities of Vancouver: existing (top); perceived (middle); neglected (bottom).
2.2.2 Edge Perception

Enhancing the image of a city is necessary not only for the expansion of the mental images of our environments, but also for the betterment of the spaces and places in which we inhabit, interact and socialize. It involves the difficult task of cultivating the existing image, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of that perception, and prioritizing crucial elements in the landscape that need to be accentuated. The process is a positive feedback loop: as the identity of a place strengthens, our sense of place of it is enriched, our physical and emotional connections are enhanced, and our attitudes and priorities to make it and the larger landscape better, intensifies.

As stated previously, the focus of this project is on large scale geomorphic edges in the urban realm of Vancouver (Figure 7); however, it is acknowledged that any assessment of the existing and potential functions of these forms in the city requires a brief elaboration of a few relevant and important attributes of these edges in the physical and visual public experience: scale, contrast, accessibility and perceived prominence.

Scale, Contrast, and Accessibility:

It is understood that the lower and upper threshold of scale to which an individual responds to is essentially limitless – identifying all of them and prioritizing most of them goes well beyond the scope of my intentions. Rather, by narrowing my focus to the major geomorphic edges within the city, I have restricted my examination of edges in the image of Vancouver to the large scale. Moreover, any evaluation of a city’s edges must determine the individual(s) from whose perspective we judge our experiences. Within the context of this analysis, the human scale of the Vancouver city-dweller will be the perspective used.
The contrast that exists between two landscape types essentially functions as the landscape edge. The contrast is an expression of the relationship between the two sides, and can vary in size, thickness, texture and color. Moreover, the level of contrast perceived between two adjacent landscapes (e.g. texture, pattern, color, topography etc.) often determines the importance, role, or function attributed to a certain edge. This perception can change dramatically depending on the size and scale of the edge experienced by the user. The Clark Drive escarpment (abrupt land-use changes) and the city's shoreline (land-water interface) are two examples of major edges with high contrast.

Like other landscape elements, the role of a particular edge in a city's image is intrinsically linked to its accessibility to the public (Lynch 1960). Whether in a physical or visual form, perceptions of an edge rely on experiences associated with it by the user. In Vancouver, we have seen over the last decade the significance of maintaining public access to our shorelines in the wake of increasing development pressures, as seen in the new high-rise communities emerging in Coal Harbour along Burrard Inlet, as well as Yaletown on the north shore of False Creek. Both City Planners and Vancouverites alike cherish the shoreline edge. In response, public access to it is maintained, and in some cases enhanced, to preserve this interface as a defining element in the city's imageability – an example of how edge accessibility and imageability live and function together and mutually support one another.

Perceived Prominence:

Perceiving edges at certain scales, with various levels of contrast and accessibility, translates into a collective impression these edges leave on the city-dweller. Moreover, different urban edges have different combinations of scale, contrast and accessibility, and thus have varying degrees of significance on the image of Vancouver. Identifying these differences, and understanding the reasons for them, can better our decision-making process when it comes to planning and prioritizing for our public open space system.

2.2.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

Eventually, some of Vancouver's urban edges begin to emerge more strongly than others as combinations of scale, contrast, and accessibility are evaluated for the city's major zones of transition. Comparing their perceived level of significance produces a prioritized list of edge 'strength'. Landscape edges that are judged to be large scale, high in contrast and highly accessible would likely register very strongly in the image of the city. Other landscape edges that balance some distinctive traits with more subtle ones may be familiar to only some Vancouverites, and not to others. And landscape edges that fail to display any strong qualities of form, contrast, or function, would probably be better off re-evaluated and perhaps re-organized before they're considered for open space prioritization. Potentially, this process could function as a guide for city planners to follow when purchasing new land for public use, or structuring the larger open space system.

Accordingly, strong, visible and memorable urban edges share distinct qualities that contribute to their role in 'imaging' a city. Lynch elaborates: “The edge also gains strength if it is laterally visible for some distance, marks a sharp gradient of area character, and clearly joins the two bounded regions.” (Lynch 1960). In Vancouver, the city's vast shoreline, the Clark Drive, Wall St. and Beatty St. escarpments, and Vancouver Heights overlooking Hastings Bowl (refer to Figure 6) are edges that retain combinations of these qualities. They all are large-scale urban edges with high contrast and strong continuity of form throughout their length. These are
among the most prominent landscape edges of Vancouver, and should be strongly integrated into any enhancement of the city's imageability. Other edges that have varying combinations of scale and contrast should be considered for prioritization as well. Arbutus ridge, a prominent geomorphic edge that winds its way on an east-west axis in Vancouver's west side (Figure 8), as well as major urban-park interfaces such as those between Stanley Park and the West End (Figure 9) and Point Grey and Pacific Spirit Regional Park, respectively, all retain attributes of strong edges that should be exposed to the Vancouver public experience as well.

To speculate further, relative weaknesses of certain urban edges could be improved through an integrated and creative process of analysis and design. Kevin Lynch expands on potential design techniques to enhance a city's urban edges (Lynch 1960):

- by individualizing one end of the edge with respect to the other;
- by structuring the edge with varying depth to allow penetration; or
- by improving visual and circulation connections to the rest of the city.

For instance, if public accessibility were enhanced and diversified along Arbutus Ridge, its identifiable strengths and prominence in shaping city form would increase. In *Image of the City*, Lynch stresses the role of accessibility in the perceptions of an edge: "If an important edge is provided with many visual and circulation connections to the rest of the city structure, then it becomes a feature to which everything else is easily aligned." (Lynch 1960) Similarly, if the Beatty St. escarpment were to be modified in favor of a more contextually viable public open space system for all people that accentuates its strong linear form, its role in the city's image for city-dwellers would be greatly enhanced (Figures 10 & 11). In other words, if we can't interact with an edge at some level, we can't generate any meaningful opinions of it. For both the Clark Drive escarpment (Figures 12 & 13) and Vancouver Heights, the visual and locational experiences would be strengthened by establishing more diversified public spaces, reducing the affect of prominent barriers to movement, and enhancing the connectivity of the site to the larger urban fabric. Lynch writes, "when two strongly contrasting regions are set in close juxtaposition, and their meeting edge is laid open to view, then visual attention is easily concentrated." (Lynch 1960). Furthermore, the economic potential of these major edges is often unrealized in Vancouver. Expanding on various combinations of living and working, within a mosaic of public and private realms, ensures a diverse socio-economic base upon which the means and resources to pay for open space purchases and edge enhancements can rely. These are but a few examples of numerous methods the city of Vancouver can implement to take advantage of our great urban edges for public use. The result, Lynch explains, is "the edge becomes a seam rather than a barrier, a line of exchange along which two areas are sewn together." (Lynch 1960).
Figure 8: A dead-end street along Arbutus Ridge; lack of public accessibility and connectivity.

Figure 9: Lagoon Drive: a thin and unimaginative public-private interface along the most popular urban-park edge in the city.

Figure 10: Beatty St. escarpment: high density, coupled with high use, demands better and more diverse public open space.

Figure 11: Beatty St. escarpment: Upscale shopping and living too expensive for the surrounding heritage neighborhoods.

Figure 12: Clark Drive escarpment: disrupted flows of people and water are but two of the by-products of a physically challenging urban edge.

Figure 13: Clark Drive escarpment: Existing land-uses limit access into the Flats and reduce the area's ability to interact with the larger urban fabric.
2.3 UNDERSTANDING CITY APPROACHES

2.3.1 Towards Vancouver’s Public Open Space System

In many ways, Vancouver is a highly functioning and liveable city, with an open space system that focuses on team sports, recreation and other outdoor activities that take full advantage of our wonderful setting and climate. The dominant and most imageable component of the city, our shoreline, is highly accessible and diversified to the recreational and social experience. However, other prominent urban edges within the city, particularly those in the internal structure, are comparatively under-utilized, failing to realize their experiential potentials in visual, physical and social aspects. The existing form and function of some of these places has been previously discussed; the reasons why the city has organized our mental, and subsequently physical, perceptions of Vancouver in such a way, need to be explored to help set the stage and framework for the methodology and design process for this project.

“We are in a time of immense frustration with governance. Every day we are overwhelmed with issues and problems which seem well beyond our control, even our ability to comprehend”

(Quayle et al. 1992)

Over a decade ago, the Urban Landscape Task Force identified some crucial barriers to implementing public ideas in the political and bureaucratic climate of Vancouver in its report Greenways – Public Ways. Among these were: political fear of change and the unknown; lack of sustainable vision for the city; lost identity of public places; and visual and ecological illiteracy (Quayle et al. 1992). After a public consultation process and much internal deliberation, the Task Force noted some important realities to planning for Vancouver’s public open space system:

- a serious neglect of the public realm and all its attendant issues
- a government that tends to conform or comply with the accepted norm
- the notion that nature represents a set of restraints, instead of being viewed as a model for social systems and place design
- a lack of an ethical approach to public life
- a lack of connecting place and education results in the lack of physical vision, imagination and excitement.
- a bureaucratic structure that views all interested parties and stakeholders as separate

Moreover, reflecting on both these realities and the existing public realm within the city, the Task Force identified five major themes that “focused on re-connecting citizens to their public realm and to nature” (ibid.): Greenway Connections, Truly Public Places, Democratic Streets, Ecological Priority and Neighbourhoods that Work. Collectively, these themes aimed to enrich the character, identity and experiences of Vancouver by enhancing the processes by which we cultivate our sense of place and our understanding of our city.

Our current vision for the direction of Vancouver, known as CityPlan, was implemented as a guide for this city’s growth and evolution in 1995. It was the product of a three-year public consultation process that developed a shared vision of the city’s future to guide policy decisions, priorities, and plans (city website). Within its stated objectives and perceived challenges, methods for enhancing the identity of city, community and neighbourhood are revealed, as are ambitious policies for new and more diverse public spaces and the increase of arts and cultural activity. The framework appears to be set for the next evolution of Vancouver, from a setting looking for a city, to a city that truly anchors its setting.
However, while recent developments in Coal Harbour and Yaletown have illustrated the city's commitment to building liveable and diversified communities with an appropriate range of public and private realms along the shoreline, other development initiatives reveal a deficiency in planning with the larger urban systems in mind – or the city's imageability. For example, two of the great escarpments of Vancouver, Beatty St. and Clark Drive, have in recent years, been transformed into a high-end retail shopping centre, and the home of new "bigbox" retail offices and commercial businesses, respectively. In what should be areas of high visual and physical public experience are instead emerging exclusive and sterile communities that are evolving with little imagination or creativity in the planning process. What better way to foster a communities sense of place than to enhance those landscape elements that naturally orient us in space and serve as reference points for all our experiences? Similarly, we tend to reserve our 'big' ideas and projects for our waterfront zones (ie. the vision for a continuous seawall, new convention centre, South East False Creek), in the process comparatively neglecting other areas in the city that are crucial to its internal structure and function (ie. False Creek Flats, Vancouver Heights, Arbutus Ridge).

2.4 SUMMARY

To summarize the theoretical orientation that provided the framework for the site selection, analysis and design for this project, there are some important points to highlight. First, the image of a city plays an important role in how it is perceived, understood and used. In addition, the image of a city often dictates how it is planned and prioritized, as this process is the product of both public opinion and bureaucratic structure. Secondly, Vancouver's image is dominated by its setting, and its spatial organization of social, economic and public realms prioritized for the shoreline environment reflects this. Thirdly, geomorphic urban edges are also important elements of Vancouver's visual and physical experiences within its internal structure, and should be preserved as accessible and highly used public spaces. Lastly, Vancouver needs to approach its public open space system in the internal parts of the city with the same energy and commitment to place-making, at a range of scales, as it does with its cherished land-water interface.
CHAPTER 3: SITE ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCING THE SITE

3.1.1 Existing Context

Figure 14: The study site in various contexts; the Clark Drive escarpment and east False Creek Flats.
The study site lies within an approximately 35-hectare industrial and rail yard area in the eastern margins of False Creek Flats, loosely bounded by Malkin Avenue and Charles St. to the north, Cottrell St. to the west, East Broadway Avenue to the south, and Clark Drive to the east. The site functions as an opportunity to explore a dynamic urban edge in transition; as such, it is essentially an area with no borders, one that penetrates and overlaps the surrounding spatial organization in hopes of soliciting insight and inspiration from the larger landscape. To commit to a connected park system, Strathcona and China Creek Parks are included in the preliminary research and analysis; to eliminate the barrier effect of Clark Drive and the escarpment, land-use possibilities and connections were explored on both sides of this major arterial; to speculate on a vision for the larger False Creek Flats, different combinations of public and private experiences were examined; and so on. The East False Creek Flats, currently in a transition stage of evolution, exists as a missing piece in the community fabric. It has been my intention to re-stitch this site in a contextual, sensible and imaginative way.

Furthermore, the area is situated in a milieu of basic ingredients for urban life: a transportation hub of Sky Trains, truck routes, rail lines and bikeways; a central locale for city parks, public houses and community centres; an educational destination for current and future students; a transitional space with aspirations to lead the city into high-tech future; an emerging hotbed for political debates over potential land-use and developments; and a part of the city with a unique character, heritage and experience. The challenge herein was to respond to the setting of the project, using the realities of the larger landscape as reference points to guide and inform the design process at various scales.

3.1.2 Historical Context

Formerly a tidal mud flat that linked False Creek with Burrard Inlet, the study area was historically home to an abundance of wildlife, streams and First Nations settlements. The Clark Drive escarpment marks what naturally was the eastern edge of False Creek, where China Creek drained into a inundated marshland (Figure 15).

However, to accommodate Vancouver's burgeoning rail industry, the flats were filled early in the 20th century by extractions from False Creek and the Grandview Cut. Constructed in 1913, the cut sliced a mile-long corridor through the east side of Vancouver to ease the grade of the Great Northern Railway into the city and to provide the means to fill the eastern marshy edges of False Creek. Over the next century, the cut developed into the most ecologically important wildlife corridor in East Vancouver. As the Millennium SkyTrain Project surfaced in the 1990's, heated debate arose over whether to extend the line west from Commercial Station to Clark Drive via the Cut. To the dismay of numerous local activists, the line was eventually brought to the eastern edge of False Creek Flats just west of Clark Drive, where it remains, largely to accommodate the development potential of the high-tech industries in the flats.

Today, the False Creek Flats is a wide open area of about 300 acres that continues to serve the railways and associated industries involved in warehousing and transhipment. These uses, however, have been in steady decline since the 1970's. According to the False Creek Flats Structure Plan, the area is expected "to emerge as a new high-tech and mixed-use employment centre with a distinct character that takes it cues from its industrial past and high-tech future." (City of Vancouver 2002). In response, various areas in the Flats have been rezoned as Comprehensive Development parcels, with some large high-tech office buildings and regional warehouses emerging from the industrial rubble. And, while some areas are
currently undergoing significant face-lifts in anticipation of new industries and businesses, other areas, particularly the eastern edge of the Flats and the Clark Drive escarpment, have seen relatively little speculation, vision or planning. In other words, the project site is simply idle, in need of some energy and guidance.

**Figure 15: Historic Context:** 1- the study site in 1904; 2-the Grandview Cut; 3-rail yards and industrial activity; 4-a current area of abandonment and neglect.
3.2 EXAMINING THE LARGER CONTEXT

3.2.1 Infrastructure, Aesthetic Attitude, Potential Problems & Barriers

Infrastructure

The structural organization of the larger area is representative of its function: a large industrial zone situated in a classic bowl, surrounded by multiple dwelling districts and strips of commercial activity (Figure 16). As major arterials and public transportation corridors sweep through the False Creek Flats, little is offered in the way of intimate experience. Most activity is reserved for the various communities and neighborhoods situated above and beyond the slopes facing the Flats; connectivity between these areas is limited at best. Numerous Vancouver landmarks in the area, such as BC Place, Science World and the Vancouver Port, serve as reference points for the physical experience. Likewise, public places such as Britannia Community Centre, Strathcona Park, and Vancouver Community College offer insights into the social functioning in the outlying neighborhoods. Furthermore, the structural evolution of the area is apparent in the re-zoning of industrial lands into comprehensive development parcels that look at multi-functional projects.

![Figure 16: existing land-use, zoning, major streets and landmarks (District Key: CD = Comprehensive Development; HA = Historic Area; RT = Two-Family Dwellings; RM = Multiple Dwelling; ID = Industrial; LID = Light Industry)](image-url)

Aesthetic Attitude

To understand the larger site, you must recognized the various aspects that contribute to the overall aesthetic attitude of the False Creek Flats and surrounding communities (Figure 17). Our physical experiences of the area are highly affected by our spatial orientation – how we approach a site, how we move in it, and how we leave it are perceptions that emerge relative
to the larger landscape. As such, the predominant visual and physical flows into the Flats are from the east (Grandview) and south (Mt. Pleasant), with Main St., Clark Drive, and East 1st Ave. serving as ushers into the city. Likewise, the city’s skyline, Stanley Park and the North Shore mountains form a unique perspective of Vancouver, and, along with the ever present political and socio-economic discrepancies between East Vancouver and the West Side, combine to amplify the “East vs. West” – “Us vs. Them” – “Here vs. There” dialectics. In the middle of these relationships lies the study area.

In addition, the surrounding communities of Strathcona, Grandview, and Mt. Pleasant all have their own story and character, displaying their neighborhood pride through community gardens, green streets, markets, festivals and heritage conservation. Similarly, different combinations of living and working have been emerging at various scales to ensure an appropriate balance of economic growth, social security and a diversified population base. The result is each area has cultivated its own sense of place and identity over the years, and exist as important components of a diversified mosaic of Vancouver urban living.

The False Creek Flats themselves have been home to various manufacturing, wholesaling, recycling and transport industries for the better part of the last century. Remnants of these processes exist in abundance today: old warehouses, historic buildings, rusted sheds, abandoned structures and rusted machinery and assorted parts. Moreover, this notion of ‘making’, or the spirit of using and re-using materials, clings to life in old and new ways: Home Depot and the Fashion Exchange building co-exist with Davis Scrap Metal and an auto-wrecker yard, for instance. The palette of colors, textures, shapes and sounds in this area create an aging and rough place in the city that speaks of our past, the layers of its uses, and the notion of how we change through time.
Potential Problems and Barriers

The physical nature of the study area poses some potential problems and barriers to any design proposal. Firstly, the steep change in gradient on the Clark Drive escarpment is a difficult issue to cope with when dealing with movement along and across this abrupt edge (Figure 18). Creative ways to provide viewing opportunities along this thin line is explored. Similarly, the site’s natural drainage pattern collects water and runoff pollutants in the open space area at the south-east corner of the False Creek Flats; because the drainage patterns of the area have been altered with fill, the build-up of toxic and inundated soil presents a real challenge for development (Figure 19).

Functionally, the escarpments and rail yards act as barriers to physical movement in and around the False Creek Flats, as well as limiting connectivity between surrounding communities (Figure 20). The Glen Drive rail yard, in particular, poses a real threat to east-west continuity because of its width and its location at the foot of the Clark Drive escarpment. Likewise, the major arterials in the area serve as channels for noise and vehicular pollution, as well as barriers to pedestrian and bike traffic. Clark Drive is notorious for these detrimental qualities (Figure 21).

Another, perhaps more subtle, threat to the area is the emergence of poorly designed and located structural forms that dominate the landscape. In recent years, numerous ‘bigbox’ retail and regional offices have obnoxiously sprung up in areas that perhaps should have been prioritized for more appropriate uses (Figure 22). Similarly, the location of the proposed VCC Sky train station is shortsighted and unimaginative, evidence of a planning process that failed to consider the importance of maintaining a great void space in the city (Figure 23). Additionally, the existing Expo Line structure, the Clark Drive Bridge, and the Grandview Viaduct are all strong forms that wind across the study site, and should be integrated into any design solution (Figure 24).
3.2.2 Political Framework and Development Interests

Due to the steady decline of industrial and rail activity in the False Creek Flats since the 1970's, interest in this central piece of prime real estate has been gaining momentum as the city and private enterprises plan for its future (Figure 25). Understanding the city's approach to the development of this region, along with the potential role of various public and private stakeholders, is crucial to the overall design process for this project.
The City's approach to this area hinges on the creation of a high-tech community, establishing a densified district that balances large office buildings with some public open space in the form of parcels of green space and a greenway. Important structural speculations included in the Structure Plan include: extending the existing grid lines into the Flats; extending the Milleneum Sky Train routes west to accommodate the high-tech community; and a rationalization of CN and BNSF rail yards to be converted in line with the city's vision for a business district.

Unfortunately, the Structure Plan fails to address some of the realities relevant to the area covered. Accommodating a vast increase in student presence and the subsequent demands for public open space and economic potential are all scenarios not explored. Similarly, generating a creative and imaginative system of public spaces that mitigate some of the existing problems of inaccessibility and drainage, as well as enhancing some of the experiential possibilities of this unique area, is non-existent. The location of the park parcels, while aligned as a linear greenway system, do not appear to be based on any contextually relevant planning and design process. Clearly, there is much room for speculation and elaboration at both the larger site scale and the study area.
3.3 Site Analysis

3.3.1 Existing Site Structure and Forms

The study site itself covers a large area in the eastern margins of False Creek Flats (Figure 26), stretching from a block east of Clark Drive to Cottrell Ave. and the old CN maintenance building in the west, from China Creek Park south of East Broadway Ave. to Strathcona Park and Charles Ave. in the north. In the central area, it is comprised mainly of light industry, rail yards, a few wholesale buildings and sporadic patches of vegetation and overgrowth. To the south adjacent to East Broadway Ave, Vancouver Community College King Edward Campus is a hub of activity, as 5000 students come here each day. To the northeast and just outside of the study area lies Britannia Community Centre and the heart of the Commercial Drive district, a beloved place of social interaction for locals and visitors alike. West from here, a short walk downhill brings you to Strathcona Park and the wonderful community gardens, with the heritage neighborhoods of Strathcona and Chinatown beyond. Moreover, within a mixture of old and new buildings, some vacant, others re-furbished, a few artists studios have taken residence to carry on the area’s tradition of using and re-using materials.

Figure 26: Existing Site Structure: buildings, forms, views and spatial organization

A large portion of the rail yards experiences poor drainage, and years of industrial and rail use have produced a very toxic soil environment. This has implications for the existing spatial organization, as businesses, wharehouses, and multiple dwelling residential units have avoided this problematic zone. Topographically, the site is essentially divided into higher and lower grounds, with the escarpments along Clark Drive and above Great Northern Way acting as barriers to movement and connectivity. Nonetheless, these abrupt slopes also offer amazing views of the city and North Shore mountains. Likewise, views of some of Vancouver’s landmarks such as Science World, Harbour View Centre and the Port cranes.
help to foster our sense of place and orient us within the larger landscape. The central area is devoid of any public experience, as parks and greenways either run adjacent to ‘bowl’ area, or stop altogether at the escarpment edges (ie. Central Valley Greenway).

Aforementioned speculation and preliminary planning decisions anticipate a number of structural and function changes to the area: the rationalization of both the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail yards south of the site’s central core and along Great Northern Way, as well as the CN yards in the Flats to the west; the development of a new Sky train station at Clark Drive and 6th Ave. to serve V.C.C.; the extension of the Millenium Line west to Finning Station along the 5th Ave ROW; and the extension of the Central Valley Greenway from the top of the Clark Drive escarpment west to False Creek.

3.3.2 Site Character

"...The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.”

Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

Contained within this unique area of Vancouver is a very interesting mosaic of materials, colors, textures, sounds and sights – most of which are products of a blend in site nature with site use. Vibrant colors of red, orange and brown dot the rusted landscape where water meets structure. Wisps of movement flicker in the sunlight, as grasses and weeds poke through hard surfaces reaching for air. Sheer walls serve as windows into the past, bent and rusted and stained in various places that only time can explain. Vast open spaces contain the voices and sounds of yesterday, and allow the imagination to soar. Creatures, more than humans, have come to inhabit the hidden spaces - birds take residence in rusted pipes, coyotes endlessly roam this urban playground. Such is life in the False Creek Flats.

Above all else, this area has always been about the use, re-use, manufacturing and transportation of materials. From train cars to truckloads, shorehouses to work sheds, assembly lines to artist studios, the Flats have always kept alive the notion of making. It has, for a long while, been the city “crawl space”; a place where we store things we might need later, exchange things we no longer need, and recycle things we want to recover. Where else in the city do you find a scrap metal yard brushing shoulders with a seafood specialty wholesaler; or a new Fashion Exchange building sitting next to an auto wrecker. The kaleidoscope of activity and use has always been quite colorful here. As such, it is absolutely crucial for the city of Vancouver to preserve this character and expand on its functions with the imagination and creativity this place deserves.
Figure 27: A photo collage of the character of East False Creek Flats and the Clark Drive escarpment.
CHAPTER 4: DESIGN FRAMEWORK

4.1 STRUCTURAL STUDIES

To discern connections between the existing site structure and the structural and political realities of the larger landscape, various structural studies were speculated upon. It was anticipated that these studies would help formulate possible strategies to guide the spatial organization of the study area. From many studies conducted to varying degrees, four were selected as an appropriate representation of existing realities: the future expansion of Vancouver Community College; the establishment of the Interscholastic Post-secondary Institute and Finning Sky train station; emerging live/work communities centred around public and community buildings; development of a public open space system on rationalized rail lands (Figure 28).

![Figure 28: Location of structural studies: 1-VCC expansion; 2-Finning Centre & Station; 3-Emerging communities; 4-public open space system.](image)

4.1.1 V.C.C. Expansion

- proposed rezoning application: current floor space of 270,000 to be increase to 675,000
- need more recreational space to accommodate higher population
- extend commercial zones along E. Broadway
- increase residential density around VCC

4.1.2 Interscholastic (Finning)
Institute and Station

- enhance economic edge along Great Northern Way
- connect Finning Station with other commercial zones
- expand high density residential near Finning Station

4.1.3 Emerging Live/Work
Communities

- preserve public and heritage buildings as areas to build community life around
- establish a residential foothold in Flats in areas of high social interaction
- merge live/work opportunities, studios and industrial warehouses to foster a lively exchange of materials
- preserve key industries that rely on using, re-using and recycling materials
4.1.4 Establishing A Public Open Space System

- 95 acres dedicated to the railyards, much of which is to be rationalized for future development
- Standard required park space for community park: approx. 2ha/1000 persons (Time-Saver Standards); between 20,000 – 40,000 people expected work/study/live in Flats (Structure Plan 2002)
- Negotiate with CN and BNSF to convert railyards to public space
- Secure drainage channels and water collection areas for park space
- Improve connectivity through greenways, public ways and linear parks
- Establish a network of community buildings and public houses
- Establish a central park space that anchors the study site and fosters a strong sense of place identity
- Capitalize on site’s unique aesthetic qualities and visual experiences

4.2 Strategies for Design

From the speculative structural studies, a set of strategies begin to emerge to help shape the general approaches of the design process. This is a crucial step for this project as it combines planning and design techniques to determine an appropriate way of prioritizing decisions – ie. what is important? And why?.

1. Increase density around VCC to pay for park acquisitions;
2. Capitalize on the economic potential in areas of high use;
3. Combine public buildings, live/work opportunities, and industrial heritage as a foundation for unique communities;
4. Enhance public activity and viewing opportunities at key places;
5. Establish a system of greenways and public ways;
6. Improve connectivity, both within the site and to the larger urban fabric;
7. Establish a central park space to anchor and heal the site.
4.3 General Programme Arguments

This section outlines a general set of instructions and objectives that are derived from a combination of the theoretical approaches to the city of Vancouver, the understanding of the False Creek Flats area, the analysis of the site's existing structure and character, and the speculative structural studies discussed previously (Figure 29). Moreover, this section will provide a rationale behind the overall vision for the East False Creek Flats as a unique place within the city.

![Figure 29: General programmatic arguments for the East False Creek Flats expressed as a collection of images.](image)

Program Components:

1. Improve community connectivity
   a. greenways/public ways
   b. different ways to move through major streets and escarpments
   c. enhance connections of existing public amenities

2. Ecological restoration and healing
   a. wetland area for remediation and education
   b. let the site 'be' by exposing natural drainage lines

3. Develop a diversified public opens space system
   a. VCC sky train plaza
   b. VCC recreational park space expansion
   c. accentuate viewing opportunities and activities on slopes
   d. interactive public experiences with wetlands
   e. linear park 'arms' to take users through the larger landscapes

4. Celebrate the industrial heritage of the False Creek Flats
   a. preserve various light-industrial operations to maintain site function
   b. preserve existing public and heritage buildings as centres of emerging communities
   c. cluster live/work opportunities, studio/worksheds, and material wholesalers/recyclers together to foster unique places of making
   d. accentuate places of historical significance in spatial organization

5. Create a unique civic place for the entire city to enjoy
   a. establish a central area for city festivals and celebration
b. allow for public-private interface for artwork and expression

c. encourage a diverse range of approaches to, and experiences in, the site

4.4 CONCEPTUAL PLAN: A VISION FOR EAST FALSE CREEK FLATS

The plan illustrates a vision for the East False Creek Flats and Clark Drive escarpment that strives to balance community needs, political realities, ecological processes and unique experiences. (1) High density residential and (2) commercial zones coincide with (3) VCC expansion and business development to capitalize on the site's economic potential. This helps to pay for (4) expansion of public open space. Moreover, an existing (5) central open space that serves as an ecological anchor to the site is preserved for the creation of a great city gathering space. Portions of the railyards are converted to (6) linear greenways and (7) drainage channels, providing inter and intra community connectivity. Complimenting this diverse public open space system is a series of (8) live/work communities that revolve around industrial processes and creativity, and are linked via the existing (9) railway arcs that function as public ways as well as spaces for exhibitions and parades. Furthermore, visual experiences are accentuated by increasing accessibility and movement along the (10) Clark Drive escarpment.
CHAPTER 5: A DESIGN PROPOSAL: IRON REED CIVIC PARK

5.1 DESIGN BRIEF
Within the framework set forth by the East False Creek Flats Conceptual Plan, a detailed portion of the site was explored on a more intimate level. The area chosen includes the large central open space (#5 in Figure 30), west to Clark Drive, east to Albion Fisheries and the railway arc, south to Great Northern Way, and north to 2nd Ave. right-of-way (Figure 31).

5.1.1 Rationale
The detailed site was chosen from the larger study area for a number of reasons; collectively, they address the project's objectives and challenges at various scales. These include:

1. The site sits at the ecological center of the study area; all water flows to the central open space.
2. The grand views of the city and the North Shore mountains are experienced along this portion of Clark Drive.
3. The topographical structure of the site creates a natural void space in the city, a place for imagination.
4. The site serves as a historical cross-section of land-use and activity: mud, toxic soil, abandoned rail yards, light-industry, new office buildings etc.
5. It is situated in a hub of activity and speculation: VCC Skytrain Proposal, Central Valley Greenway extension; VCC expansion etc.
6. Social implications of inter-community connectivity through this site are great.
7. The site's potential function as a great public space within the larger urban structure will strengthen place identity and enrich the image of Vancouver.

5.2 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The general set of instructions contained in Chapter 4: Design Framework provide a guide to a more detailed program for the smaller area. The relationship in decision-making between different scales is paramount to the design process of this project. Each step informs the next, and the design exploration becomes increasingly more explicit and specific as the project increases. Moreover, this is not necessarily a linear process; in contrast, it is a circular feedback process of speculation and design through a highly flexible scope of specificity and scale.

Expanding on the site analysis and programming from the larger area, the detail site program is organized to represent the various approaches and attitudes taken for the design.

5.2.1 Improve Connectivity

1. Clark Drive
   a. Major pedestrian-controlled crosswalks;
   b. Slope into Flats become pedestrian and wheelchair friendly;
   c. Easy high volume pedestrian access from proposed VCC Sky train station to east side of Clark Drive (movement to/from Commercial Drive);
   d. Westward continuation of Central Valley Greenway underneath Clark Drive Bridge.

2. Great Northern Way
   a. Narrow GNW;
   b. Center median from Clark Drive to Glen Drive;
   c. Major pedestrian intersection at Keith Drive and GNW;
   d. Pedestrian tunnel under GNW from proposed VCC Sky train station to proposed VCC expansion;
   e. Re-grade portions of GNW that exceed 8%.

3. Keith Drive
   a. Keith Drive becomes main pedestrian mall from VCC to the Flats;
   b. Auto-access only for VCC underground parking;
   c. Sidewalks expanded to accommodate patio seating and social activity;
   d. Keith Drive ROW preserved as major entrance into park site; needs to graded accordingly;
   e. Keith Drive must not impede site drainage to False Creek.

4. Glen Drive
   a. Connects E. Broadway Ave. to Terminal Ave;
   b. Closes periodically during festivals and celebrations;
   c. Traffic-calming measures used at Glen Drive-public arcway intersection;
   d. Glen Drive must not impede site drainage to False Creek.

5. Public Arcway
   a. Follows existing rail lines;
   b. Wide enough to accommodate pedestrian, bike and rail usage;
   c. Provides seating and viewing opportunities for parade processions;
   d. Provides access to businesses and studios along its length.

6. Central Valley Greenway
   a. Must maintain ease of flow through Clark Drive and rail yard barriers;
   b. To accommodate high volumes of pedestrians and cyclists;
c. To provide seating and viewing opportunities where appropriate;
d. As a significant form in the landscape, structural materials should reflect site
   character;
e. Must connect with local and community public ways;
f. Must be safe for all users in all conditions at all times of the day.

7. Rail Yards
   a. BNSF south tracks are rationalized;
   b. Access to rail line edge is constant;
c. Rail crossings occur at points of high activity or high-use.

5.2.2 Enhance the Views

1. From Clark Drive Escarpment
   a. Widen west sidewalk of Clark Drive to accommodate large planter, seating and
      sunken walkway;
   b. Tree and shrub planting along Clark Drive for pollution and noise buffer;
   c. Sidewalk railings should not impede views from seating;
   d. Intersection and associated public spaces 6th Ave. and Clark Drive must be
      kept open to enhance arrival and open views to city and mountains;
   e. 4th Avenue entrance to escarpment slope accentuated as a place for pause and
      activity;
   f. Escarpment slope maintained as open grass space to maintain views to city
      and park.

2. From VCC Sky train Plaza
   a. Upper plaza designed maintained as open space to maintain scale of
      experience and views;
   b. Major view corridor to Science World and BC Place accentuated in Plaza form;
   c. Views of various park activities and events accessible on various levels of
      Plaza.

3. From East Broadway Avenue
   a. Maintain views down Keith Drive and Flats from existing VCC viewing platform.

4. From Within the Park Area
   a. To Science World and BC Place;
   b. To the North Shore Mountains where possible;
   c. As an revelation of the city's grid change location;
   d. Eastwards into the Cut and incoming trains;
   e. To important structural facilities;
   f. To guide the physical experience;
   g. By varying the site's internal topography.

5.2.3 Heal the Site

1. A Central Wetland Area
   a. A natural catchment basin for site drainage;
   b. An area that evolves into a rich ecological habitat;
   c. A boardwalk that covers an appropriate range of wetland experiences;
   d. Connected to a system of drainage channels that collect, remediate and
      transport area runoff to False Creek;
   e. Interactive areas for education;
   f. A display house to provide info about the park and events;
   g. A pump house/monitoring station to regulate runoff toxicity, particulate, acidity
      levels.
2. A Constructed Wetland
   a. A rock-reed filter bed that absorbs and remediates runoff;
   b. Seating and walkways to encourage interaction and understanding of wetland;
   c. To serve as a transition space between the built and un-built landscapes.

3. A Seasonal Public Pool
   a. With changing uses depending on seasons;
   b. Receives filtered and naturally treated water from the wetlands and constructed wetland via weir systems;
   c. Different portions of the pool accommodate different ages and users;
   d. Seating is oriented to maximize sun exposure;
   e. Bath houses for the summer and winter;
   f. Is located to facilitate the natural drainage course of the site.

5.2.4 Celebrate the Process of Making

1. A public studio space within the park that encourages industrial design and creativity
   a. Indoor and outdoor spaces depending on activity and season;
   b. Unique and creative furniture and structural components that represent the material character of the site;
   c. A permanent concession/bathroom area;
   d. Creative use of lighting to encourage all-day activities.

2. A display area where local artists can show work
   a. Located in area of high activity and exposure;
   b. To be visually and physically linked to the public studio space.

3. An outdoor playground
   a. Emphasizing a connection to Grandview Elementary and Park;
   b. Fosters an understanding of the seasonal nature of the surrounding landscape;
   c. An indoor/outdoor classroom for learning.

5.2.5 Establish a Place for the City to Gather

1. Festival/Exhibition grounds
   a. Outdoor theatre/bowl to hold up to 5-6000 people;
   b. Stage area that can accommodate a range of events, concerts etc.;
   c. Permanent bathrooms and concession areas;
   d. Open space for event parking;
   e. Adjacent space for food fair/markets/exhibits;
   f. VIP/event staff/participant staging area;
   g. An event layout that can be exclusive without total restriction of public access;
   h. Strong and dominating formal quality that anchors the social activity of the site;
   i. southern exposure.

2. Parade Route/Exhibit Promenade
   a. Linked to various live/work communities via the public arcway;
   b. 5th Ave. ROW (old BNSF track lines) reserved for processional route;
   c. Parade viewing opportunities along the route;
   d. A permanent exhibit area for general public viewing;
   e. A permanent structure that provides info on past, current and upcoming events and displays.

3. Adjacent Open Space
   a. A recreational field to host important sporting events;
   b. A picnic area;
   c. Multi-functional spaces that fulfill numerous event dema
5.3 DESIGN PRECEDE NTS

Certain precedents in the urban landscape outside of Vancouver were examined for their form and function, particularly those whose context, materials, and creative inspirations were comparable to those for this project (Figure 32).

![Design precedents](image)

*Figure 32: Design precedents (clockwise from top left): Love Parade display, Postdamer Hotbahnhof, Berlin; Gouvernmentplein, Bergen Op Zoom, Bart Brands; T. Durieux-Park, Berlin; private garden of E.on Eutliberg, Zurich, Dieter Kienast; Parc de Bercy, Paris; The Cardboard Pod, Alabama, Samuel Mockbee.*
In addition, the visual and structural nature of this area is largely dominated by the views, open spaces and existing forms. As such, a crucial challenge to the success of the project is to aesthetically and functionally incorporate some of these forms into the design interventions. Possible aspects of formal design to consider include:

- accentuating the grid change in an explicit manner;
- overlapping areas should be functionally compatible as well;
- physical and visual terminus' should be celebrated and revealed;
- existing and proposed Sky Train structures should be incorporated into design interventions where possible to reduce contrast;
- dark spaces should be given life.
5.4 MATERIALS PALETTE

Figure 33: Materials palette: rusted tin, wood beams, concrete, bent metal, steel
Figure 34: A spirited approach: celebration, interactive experiences, diverse public spaces.
5.5.1 Iron Reed Civic Park

Drawing from a rich and insightful design palette of site analysis, experiences, character and materials, a multi-dimensional city park emerges that balances programmatic needs, formal intentions and visual enhancements of the Clark Drive escarpment and East False Creek Flats. Iron Reed Civic Park is not only a park that addresses local concerns of the various communities, it stands out as a viable solution for a unique and valuable place within the larger public open space system of the city.

Figure 35: Iron Reed Civic Park, East False Creek Flats: master plan of the park, with major interventions labeled – The Grandview Plaza, The Estuary, The Reedbed, The Seasonal Pool, The Graffiti Workshop, The Mud Flats, and The Roundhouse Celebration Grounds. Functional attributes include: overlapping systems of use, healing of the site, educational emphasis on interaction, flexible open spaces, and topographical roles. Experiential attributes include: formal design shapes orientation, views are enhanced, layers of the site are exposed, site context is understood, sense of time and seasons is revealed, process of making is elaborated, a unique place of celebration for the entire city is realized.
5.5.2 Ways In, Ways Out

As part of a community vision for the larger area that hinges on high connectivity and movement (refer to Figure 30), the detail site must address physical and structural barriers to access, as well as enhancing the experiences of approaching and leaving the park area. Under this theme, various design interventions of the major gateways into the site are proposed (Figures 36-40).

Figure 36: The Grand Staircase: section-elevation looking south at grade change from VCC plaza (far left) to Glen Drive; a grand entrance into the park focusing on external and internal views, and a diversified and overlapping system of activities; the grand staircase is comprised of suspended concrete and steel structure to expose wetland and reveal layers of site.

Figure 37: Keith Drive Entrance: section-elevation looking west showing entrance from Great Northern Way to the 5th Ave. Promenade, maintaining the large scale experiences of the site; cross-section of pool weir-system is shown.

Figure 38: 4th Avenue Descent: section-elevation looking north illustrating the re-grading of the escarpment; Clark Drive sidewalk is widened and tree-lined; viewing opportunities are enhanced, and the slope becomes an activity node while runoff is collected at the base; live/work residential townhouses (max. 3 story) with roof top gardens are in the middle background; a metal footbridge crosses the tracks and wetland to the central park area.
Figure 39: Keith Drive Commercial Area: section-elevation looking south illustrates a pedestrian-oriented Keith Dr. with an emphasis on social activity within a commercial strip adjacent to Vancouver Community College; VCC park "The Stage" absorbs social and recreational needs of the school.

Figure 40: Central Valley Greenway extension: sketch looking east into the Grandview Cut demonstrating how the Greenway by-passes traffic-congested Clark Drive and cuts underneath the bridge at a gentle slope; the path is 5m wide and the dark space shown here is lit up with different colors at night.
5.5.3 GrandView SkyTrain Plaza

The visual experiences make this site one of the unique places in the city. As such, places of high use and activity with great viewing opportunities were candidates for enhancement. Within this focus, the proposed VCC Sky Train Plaza is a significant intervention for the development of a major viewing node into a vibrant social space (Figures 41-43).

Figure 41: Grandview Plaza and Clark Drive Bridge Pedestrian Underpass: north-facing section-elevation showing the multi-leveled Sky Train plaza, with a grass viewing lawn above the main receiving level; movement east to Commercial Drive area is unrestricted via a pedestrian walkway and staircase from the main level under the bridge to 6th Avenue; the views and nature of the open space are accentuated with a simple exposed upper plaza without trees; underneath, bathroom facilities, ticket kiosks and an info booth support thousands of daily boarders; overall, the plaza is simple and is oriented towards the park area, both in structure and function.

Figure 42: Clark Drive Bridge and VCC Pedestrian Tunnel: section-elevation looking east illustrating the relationship between the Grandview Cut, Clark Drive, the wetlands and VCC Sky Train station; social activity radiates from the plaza north along Clark Drive via a widened viewing sidewalk; the receiving level of the station channels boarders down to the park, up to the Grandview Plaza, or south to VCC campus via a pedestrian tunnel (glass block and skylights illuminate the tunnel); on the left, the Central Valley Greenway cuts underneath the bridge to avoid traffic congestion on Clark Drive and to provide a grand entrance for commuters into the park.
Figure 43: View of Iron Reed Civic Park From Clark Drive Bridge: perspective sketch depicts the visual experience of the park below and the city beyond from the top of the Clark Drive escarpment; strong forms combine with large open spaces to create a grand and unique social heart within Vancouver.
5.5.4 The Estuary and The Reedbed

Undoubtedly one of the most crucial aspects of any good design solution is to allow the site to "be", to let the energy and processes flow as they do naturally. Such is the case with the Iron Reed Civic Park. One of the major design initiatives is to facilitate the healing of the site in hopes of achieving long term ecological sustainability. In addition, combining this with a socially rich and active public open space system produces a highly interactive relationship between users and the landscape. Figures 44-48 demonstrate a successful merging between two dynamic systems: a natural and constructed wetland filtering system and a seasonal pool that varies in function and use over the year. Together these processes enhance both the ecological and social health of the site.

Figure 44: The 'Reedbed' Constructed Wetland: section-elevation looking west illustrating how water moves through this portion of the site – VCC Stage park absorbs and infiltrates rain and runoff, whereupon water percolates down gravel bed and under GNW into large reed-rock constructed wetland; water eventually accumulates in the 'Reedbed' and is filtered into the seasonal pool via a monitored weir system; water eventually leaves the west end of the pool and continues to drain into False Creek via a drainage channel. The process allows for public interaction and understanding of an important natural process.

Figure 45: Bath House and Sauna: southwest-facing section-elevation showing the spatial relationships between the seasonal pool, the bath house and the Keith Drive entrance; the bath houses are incorporated into the Sky Train's concrete structure to reduce vertical contrast; long wooden decks (left) and a picnic lawn (right) offer good sun exposure around the pool. The bath houses are change/wash rooms in the warmer months, and sauna/exercise rooms in colder temperatures.

Figure 46: Weir system and pump house: runoff from the estuary wetlands passes through the weir and into the holding cell that monitors water quality, toxicity and acidity; the water then is pumped out through the grass strip and into the seasonal pool; the pump house regulates this process and determines water quality and levels for the pool. In the colder months, the weir is left down and runoff passes freely into the pool, creating another wetland area.
**Figure 47:** The Info Box exhibit center: perspective view facing east inside the Info Box, an old train car refurbished in red tin and window slits; it functions as an information on park history, past and future events, and artist displays; jutting out into the estuary wetlands and situated at the terminal end of the exhibition promenade, it serves as a transitional portal between two systems – ecological and social.

**Figure 48:** The Info Box: section-elevation looking north showing the Info Box suspended over the natural wetlands by a steel cage deck; on either side, steel cage walkways extend the Promenade rail tracks out into the wetland, ending at a steel cage viewing platform directly east of the Info Box. The Box stands out in the green and brown landscapes, exemplifying the interactive and educational approach of the park.
The Graffiti Workshop and The MudFlats

The celebration of the processes of making, re-using, recycling, manufacturing and creating have long been associated with the False Creek Flats. Even in times of neglect and decomposition, the area retains a unique character and aesthetic attitude not found elsewhere in the city. Preserving this spirit while encouraging the emergence of local artists and designers represents an inspiration for new public places and social activities. Figures 49-53 illustrate this notion through various design interventions.

Figure 49: The Graffiti Workshop: section-elevation looking west illustrates how the Graffiti Workshop community studio building is nestled underneath the Roundhouse Celebration Grounds bowl; bordered by a high red-tin wall and the wetland, the Workshop is a vibrant social space for locals and visitors alike to work and create with industrial materials; an outdoor work area and permanent concession stand support public activity, and work can be displayed for commuter too on the upper viewing platforms; again, the bold use of red tin draws attention to the area and gives a usual dark and avoided place a high level of exposure and use; creative lighting and design features allow for this space to be used at all hours of the day.

Figure 50: Public bench: detail of steel-grate and red-tin bench protruding from large red-tin wall at the Graffiti Workshop; encouraging intimate experiences with materials; understanding how things are made and put together.

Figure 51: Water Wall: elevation of wall intervention at Graffiti Workshop; water drains from above planter through the slot and down a haphazard series of metallic ridges and depressions; over time, the wall takes on a rusted complexion of oranges, yellows, reds etc.; an insight into the nature of time and how it affects materials.
Figure 52: The Mudflats: detail plan view of The Mudflats playground area and outdoor classroom; spanning the escarpment, the playground is a series of levels that bring the wetland experience up the hill; each level can be used as a mud pit, a sand box, a planting bed etc.; at the base is the great mud bowl where kids, pets, and adults can get knee deep in warm and wet earth; the classroom is proposed in association with Grandview Elementary and enhances the notion of a playground as a canvas for learning about each other and the landscapes we inhabit.

Figure 53: The Mud Bowl: perspective sketch of kids playing at the edge of the great mud bowl; seasonal water fluctuations and plant life teach kids how landscapes change over time.
The Roundhouse Celebration Grounds are located in the central open area of Iron Reed Civic Park, providing a large scale spatial reference for our mental image of the site, as well as serving as a social anchor for local and city-wide festivals and exhibitions. Its formal design merges with its relation to other park amenities to create a harmonious relationship between form and function. For instance, the south-facing inclined grass plane forms the festival bowl, also serving as the backbone for the Central Valley Greenway as well as physical barrier from which the Graffiti Workshop emerges. This major intervention is interwoven with another flat grass plan, a physical and visual reference to the contrast in grid change at this location, to illustrate how variations of land forms and uses are dependent on the primal layers they rest upon. Moreover, spatial configurations of the Grounds allow for a large range of events to be held on a demanding schedule, providing flexible solution to public and private systems of movement and experiences (Figures 54-58).

**Figure 54:** Roundhouse Celebration Grounds: section-elevation looking north emphasizing size and scale of the festival bowl and stage area; in the background, the Central Valley Greenway and viewing platforms follow the top ridge of the bowl; to the left, the large wall created by the grand bowl becomes home to a permanent concession stand and bathroom facilities; Glen Drive is closed to vehicular traffic during weekends and events.

**Figure 55:** Roundhouse Celebration Grounds: east-facing section-elevation showing slope structure of festival bowl, and its spatial relationship to the playing fields (far left), the Central Valley Greenway, and the Exhibition Promenade; the bowl functions for big and small events, absorbing up to 6000 people for large festivals, or serving as a grand open stage and grandstand for recreation and leisure.

**Figure 56:** Public Arcway and Parade Route: section depicting a procession of artwork and exhibits along the grand Public Arcway that connects various live/work communities in the Flats.
Figure 57: Vision for the Vancouver Festival of Industrial Design: illustrative plan of a potential event that could occur in the festival grounds; revealed is the functional and spatial relationships between the festival grounds and the parade route, where materials and works are collected along the grand Public Arcway and transported to the Exhibition Promenade where they are used to make the stage or are put on display for all to see and admire; program issues are also explored in the plan, such as event parking, food fairs, merchant sales, and ticket gates.

Figure 58: Event-specific Stage and Exhibit area: sketch of stage made from sheet metal, steel cable and steel beams for the Vancouver Festival of Industrial Design; the making and re-making of the central stage becomes a famous right of passage for all events at the park, and is a highly spectated event.
CHAPTER 6: FINALE

6.1 Summary of Design Implications
In any design project, there are numerous factors to consider in order to ensure a viable and credible solution. This project has considered some of these, namely those associated with the political realities of the city as a whole, the False Creek Flats, and the eastern margins of the industrial rail yards. Also reviewed were many of the existing development proposals in the area, as well as some of the needs of the emerging communities in various neighborhoods. Moreover, monetary implications of the various proposals were taken into account in the area's spatial configuration, as high density residential and commercial zones were slotted in areas to help pay for park acquisitions. Collectively, exploring these issues has given the design process and proposals a certain degree of credibility and contextual relevance.

Nonetheless, speculation on incremental park purchases and ongoing negotiations with CN and BNSF would provide a realistic time frame under which the project could operate. Similarly, examining possibilities of public-private-partnerships, particularly in situations where large developments could help pay for adjacent public spaces or social housing is another avenue that would help enhance the viability of the design approach.

6.2 Conclusion
This project focuses on the creation of a dynamic public open space system in a unique and highly identifiable place within the surrounding urban fabric of the False Creek Flats. The proposed Iron Reed Civic Park offers a provocative and imaginative solution to this challenge while enhancing the overall imageability of the city by accentuating experiences within its internal structure. Moreover, the proposal is successful in addressing local needs, capitalizing on the site’s character and aesthetics, and representing the function of this edge within the context of the larger city.

In addition, the design proposals contained herein aim to reveal connections between planning for a public open space system and designing the public spaces that make up that system. The design process followed was intended to recognize and understand a fundamental aspect of this connection. The image of a city is a collective mental image of our physical experiences, made up of our perceptions and interpretations of the many landscapes in which we inhabit, interact, and move in the urban realm. Large scale experiences inform smaller ones, and vice versa. In order to understand the nature of a place and recognize what makes it successful or not, we need to view landscapes through an everchanging scope, embracing differences and drawing connections between scales. As such, a dynamic and imaginative design process is crucial to the development of great and lively places.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


