

# DESIGNING OUTDOOR SPACES

75 MINUTES

AVI10, AVI20,  
SNC1D, CGC1D

A high school lesson plan provided by the University of Guelph

Landscape architecture is a profession that combines art and science to design outdoor spaces. Students will have the opportunity to learn more in-depth of what landscape architecture is, and what a Landscape Architect does. They will use critical thinking and creativity to gain a new perspective of landscapes, and how space use is taken into consideration. Students will be able to apply design skills through collaboration on a site plan.

## Curriculum Alignments and Expectations

- Apply elements and principles of design to create art works for the purpose of self-expression and to communicate ideas, information, and/or messages;
- Demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the society in which they were created, and of how they can affect personal values;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the types of knowledge and skills developed in visual arts, and identify various opportunities related to visual arts.
- Investigate factors related to human activity that affect terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and explain how they affect the sustainability of these ecosystems
- Analyse a land-use map or official plan for a specific community, and describe the spatial significance of the community's land-use pattern

## Learning Objectives

- Develop an understanding of landscape architecture
- Discover careers related to landscape architecture
- Gain a new perspective and appreciation of landscapes and space use
- Apply creativity and design skills through activities

## Assessment Strategies and Success Criteria

- Collaboration
- Summary and debrief
- Open-ended questions

## Cross Curricular Links

- Career Studies - Identifying possible destinations and pathways
- Integrated Arts - The creative process
- Integrated Arts - Tools, Techniques and Technologies

## Materials

- Landscape images
- Master site plan and blank site plans – this will be the shape of the site and can include any major features existing; ie. Buildings, rivers/lakes, etc.
- Pieces of site plan features; ie. Trees, plants, seating areas, pathways, etc. OR tracing paper (found at art stores or staples) for students to draw over the blank site plan and completely customize the space they envision

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## TEACHER NOTES

### 1. Activity 1: Snowball - What is Landscape Architecture?

Ask the students what they think landscape architecture is. Hand each student a small piece of paper and give them no more than 2 minutes to write down their answer. Tell them to work individually and write down the first word or phrase that comes to mind, remind them it will be anonymous. Then pass a basket around and ask them to ball up their piece of paper and toss it in. Pull out random pieces of paper and read them and write down these words/phrases on the board, only pull out as many papers as time permits.

This will give you an idea of the depth of knowledge students have on the profession of landscape architecture.

**Landscape architecture** is the combination of art and science to design outdoor spaces. This can range from residential spaces, urban parks, streetscapes, school campuses, and more. Other projects can include restoration of natural spaces such as wetlands and forested land.

### 2. Provide examples of careers:

- Landscape architect
- Urban designer
- Parks planner
- Conservation officer
- Resort, destination, and attractions designer

- ### 3. Ask the students how they perceive outdoor spaces, and what kinds of details that they notice.

For example, when the students are at a park, do they notice details such as certain materials used, design forms, the weather in relation to the space, or do they not think much about it? This will help establish an understanding of the depth of knowledge the students have. This will also help introduce the next activity: Looking at Landscapes.

### 4. Activity 2: Looking at Landscapes

Required Materials: landscape images, question sheet, pencil/pen

Hand out images of different landscapes, or go for a walk and explore different landscapes. Have them take a moment to look at the image or space in front of them. Ask students to explore each landscape and evaluate it based on their five senses. Have them record their findings.

Discuss the depth of what landscape architects analyze in a space.

When visiting the site, landscape architects will conduct an inventory analysis. Inventory analysis includes (but is not limited to) recording:

- Direction that seasonal winds approach the site
- Sun exposure/shaded areas throughout the day

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- Existing buildings and vegetation – this should include the building material (brick, concrete, etc.) and size, existing trees and their conditions, etc.
  - Condition of soil
  - Pedestrian/vehicular traffic
5. Cover the importance of environmental conservation and how climate change effects the field of landscape architecture.

As climate change is becoming more of a threat, landscape architecture is a field that plays a significant role in how we can address climate change. As urbanization spreads, there is a larger need for implementing green spaces, as well as conserving, protecting, and rehabilitating existing natural lands. Landscape architecture acts as the bridge between the human world and the natural world.

The goal is to reduce the gap between the two worlds and live harmoniously together through smart design of outdoor spaces. Landscape architects strive to deepen and improve the emotional connection humans have to nature, which hopefully results in increased compassion for the natural environment.

6. Discuss briefly the difference between a plan view, elevation view, and perspective view with plans/images to show as examples. Explain how plans are used to help clients envision the new design of the site. Presentation is important in this field to sell the design to the client and effectively communicate ideas.

**Plan view** is the bird's eye view of the site. In other words, looking at the site from directly above. Two-dimensional.

**Elevation view** is the front or side view of the site. Two-dimensional

**Perspective view** showcases the height, width, and depth. More realistic view of the site. Three-dimensional.

## 7. Activity 3: Design Exercise

Required Materials: Master plan; blank site plans; pieces of site features OR tracing paper and pencils

Provide the students with a blank site plan and feature pieces (or tracing paper) and give them the opportunity to customize the space the way they would like to.

8. Debrief each group's site plan and connect it back to key principles from earlier in the lesson.



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## Additional Resources

- More about Landscape Architecture from the [School of Environmental Design and Rural Development](#)
- [Eco Canada Career Profile of a Landscape Architect](#)
- CSLA – [Canadian Society of Landscape Architects](#)

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## Example of Site Plan

This is Branion plaza at the University of Guelph campus.

Create blank site plans and include a list of components that can be incorporated into students' landscape designs. These could include trees, plants, pathways, benches, gardens, etc.

