

PART

Park Access Ramp Transformation Addressing Heat Islands in East Vancouver

A design proposal for CityStudio Vancouver by
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students in the Langara College Fine Arts program, Summer 2018 Design Special Projects class.
Instructor: Philip Robbins.

Project Overview - The Site

The access ramp at the corner of Alexander and Main is the only way to access CRAB park on foot for those that are disabled and live in the immediate area. No busses serve the park itself, parking is limited, and many residents of East Vancouver - particularly those most vulnerable to the impacts of high temperatures - lack cars.

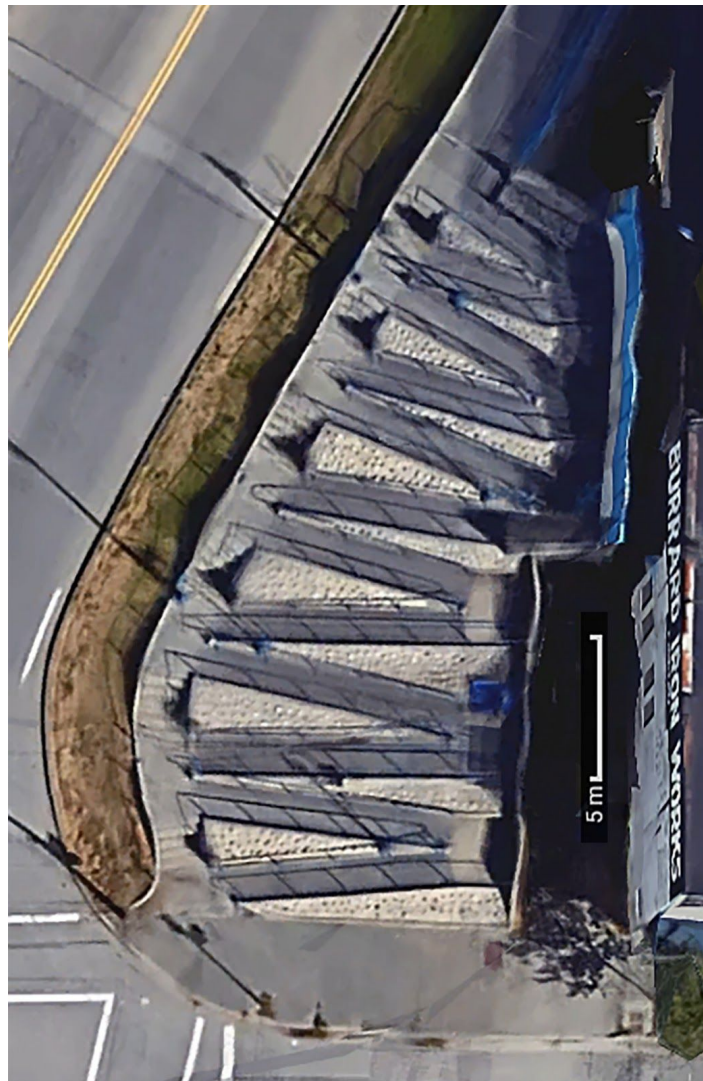


Photo from Google Maps



Photo by Jeff Powell

As the above photos show, the site is a concrete jungle. There is no shade, no greenery, and only one bench approximately one third of the way up the climb. In the afternoon, the south western exposure, exposed concrete, and the heat reflected off the building to the east can combine to make the site uncomfortably hot. In addition, the ramp itself is also formidably long, including twelve sloped legs and as many hairpin turns, making the climb a long process. Even those walking the shorter and straighter sidewalk are confronted with six sets of stairs.

In addition to the physical difficulty of climbing the ramp, it's simply not attractive and there is no signage indicating that CRAB park - with grass, trees, shade, a view of the harbour, and cooling breezes - is just a short walk away, on the other side of the railroad tracks.

Proposal - Summary

Our suggested modifications are guided by these principles:

- Enhance access to CRAB park
- Reduce heat on the access ramp
- Unite locals with the space
- Support Vancouver greenest city 2020

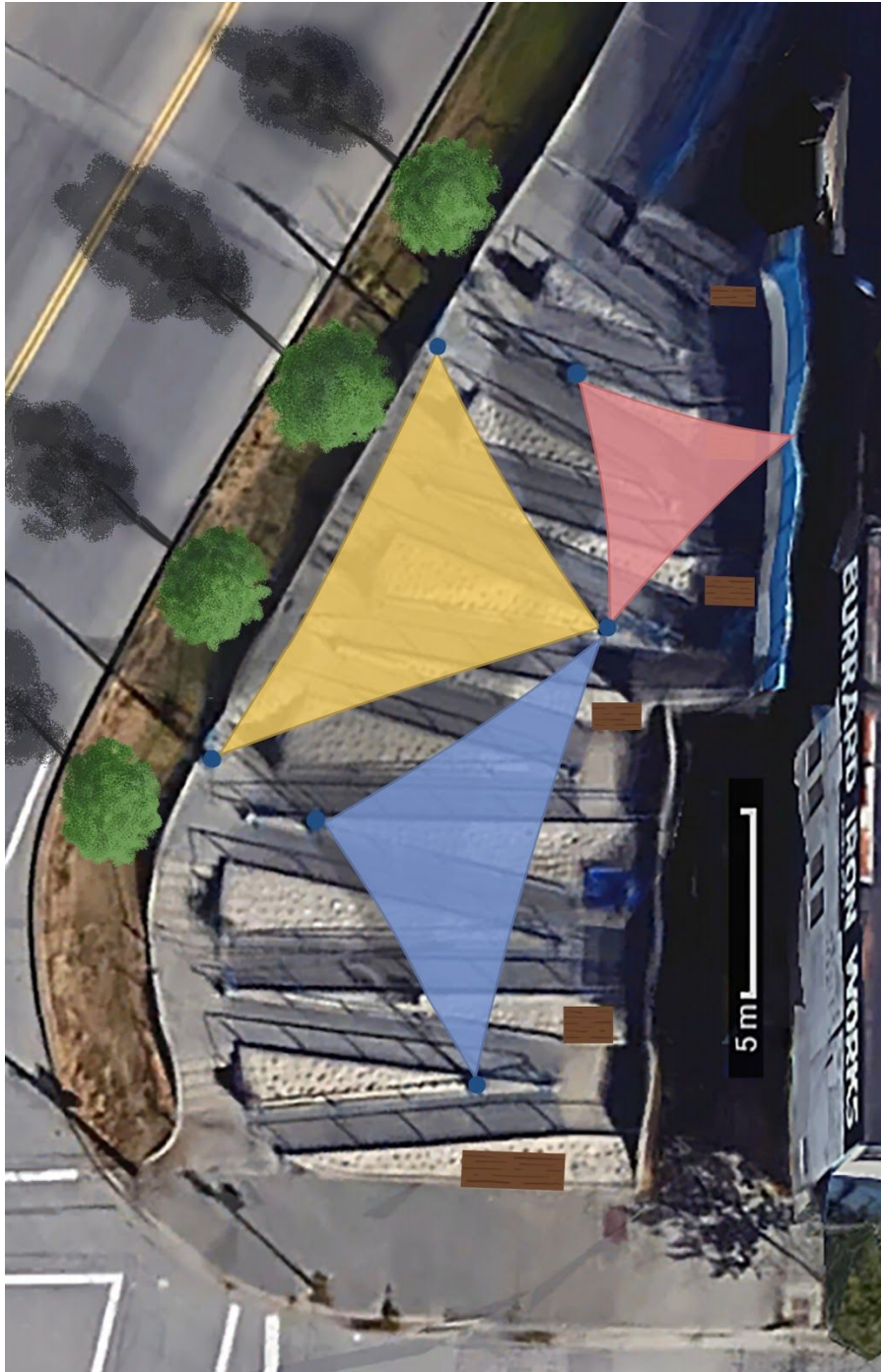
The project is broken into three phases, in part to address the limited funds available to develop a project from the course, but also because some of these mitigations could be made relatively quickly while others are being planned in depth.

Phase 1: Easy Mitigations

With a very limited budget, it is possible to make the ramp cooler and easier to climb. We propose:

- **Shade Sails** - shade cloth supported between existing light standards
- **Additional Seating** - more benches to give those climbing the ramp additional resting areas
- **Shade Trees** - in the grass area between the ramp and Main Street

These few additions would make the ramp cooler and more inviting:



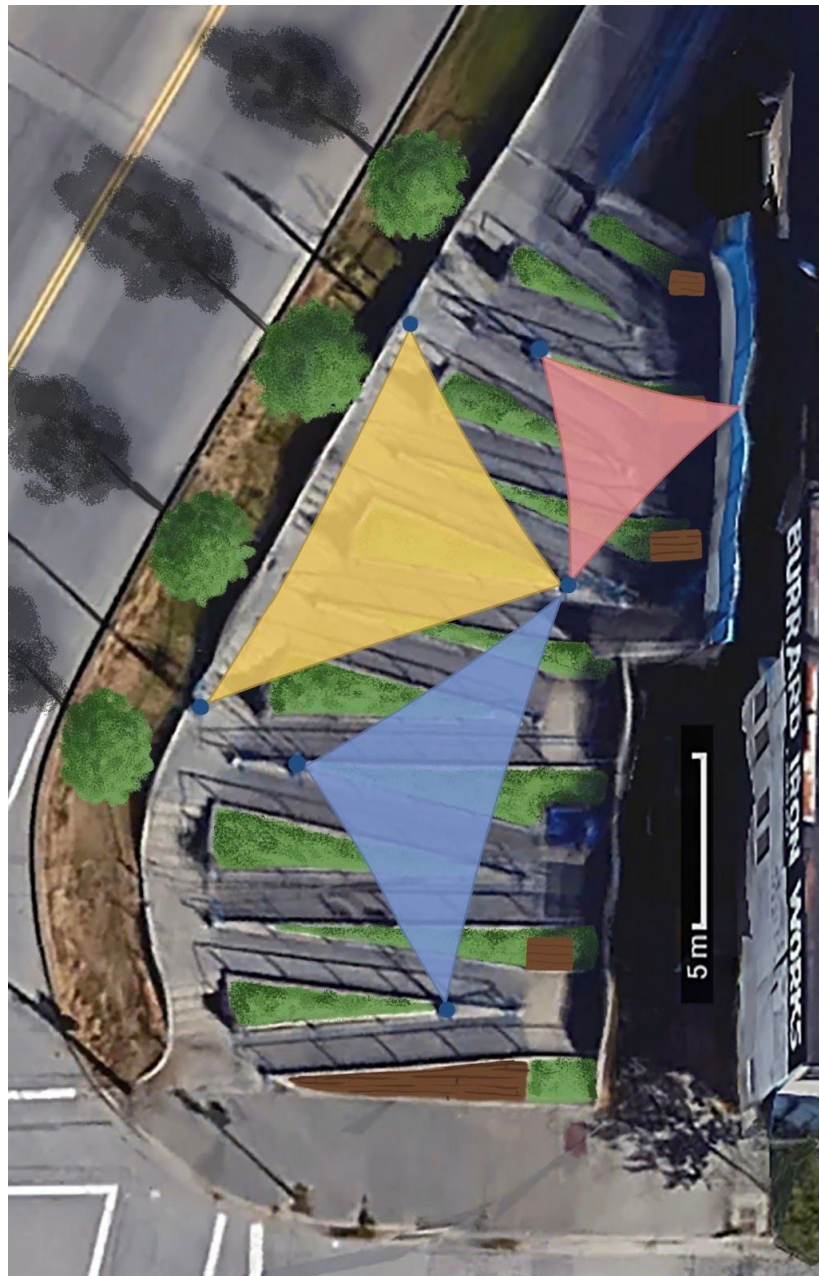
Phase 1 - Photo from Google Maps. Additions by Heather Paynter

Phase 2: Regreening

A more extensive rework that will make the ramp more attractive - and cooler - and that leaves all phase 1 changes in place:

- **Remove Concrete** - from the triangular beds between the legs of the ramp
- **Create Planting Beds** - to level the soil
- **Add Plants** - ideally hardy, local species that will need minimal maintenance

Note: there were originally plants in these beds, so the ramp can support this phase. See Appendix B.



Phase 2 - Photo from Google Maps. Additions by Heather Paynter

Phase 3: Additional Improvements

As we researched this project, the needs of the area, and received feedback from others, additional enhancements came up that go beyond simply addressing the heat. As there are changes coming to the port (which will reduce the view from CRAB park) and to Alexander Street (traffic calming and a bike path) it is possible that some or all of these could be part of those larger efforts.

- **Permanent Weather Shelter** - replace the sun shades from phase 1 with a permanent structure that can withstand snow load and provide both shade and shelter from rain
- **Public Art** - there are multiple opportunities for local artists to add public art to this space: painting the existing walls and fence, in the new weather shelter, and freestanding work
- **Share Local History** - provide information about the indigenous people that lived here, and about CRAB park and its creation
- **Lighting** - replace the existing lights with better, lower power lighting
- **Add Signage for CRAB Park** - invite those in East Vancouver to use the park in their midst, something many probably don't even know exists
- **Create a Harbour Lookout** - add benches and shade along the sidewalk at the top of the overpass, to help replace the view lost as a result of the port expansion

Since the current project focused on heat island related issues and had a limited budget, we did not create visuals for these items, but we feel strongly that it is possible to make this ramp - the entrance to CRAB park - much more than it is. It could be a showpiece. The community that lives within just a few blocks would use it - and the park itself - much more if these efforts were made.

Appendix A - Overview of the Course

The Summer 2018 Design Special Projects course from the Fine Arts Department at Langara College was an intensive, six week, effort. With the assistance of CityStudio Vancouver, it focused on addressing the impacts of urban heat islands in East Vancouver. Students in the class researched heat islands, the nature of the populations most vulnerable, and toured the area in person. Smaller groups picked one area or issue and developed approaches to mitigate it. An early presentation provided feedback and helped groups make changes to better target their efforts, and a final presentation on June 18, 2018 showed the projects to representatives of CityStudio and the City of Vancouver. Some funding is available to implement one project.

Appendix B - Site Changes Between 2006 and 2008

The ramp this project addresses used to have plants on it, including both grasses and trees. That greenery was removed between 2006 and 2008. The images below were taken from the Vancouver GIS database. The left image is from 2006, the right from 2008.



2006 / 2008 photos from Vancouver GIS database

The removal of that greenery is quite striking, and clearly at odds with Vancouver's stated goal of becoming the [world's greenest city by 2020](#).

Appendix C - Thanks

We thank CityStudio Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, Langara College, and all those who assisted us in our efforts. We are most appreciative of our instructor, Philip Robbins, who went above and beyond in creating this class and working with all the students so well and so closely.