

LANGARA APPL 5395
URBAN DESIGN
MARCH 2026

URBAN DESIGN PROPOSAL
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LANGARA GATEWAY PLAZA



INTRODUCTION

Site summary

In the heart of Vancouver is Langara College. The campus has residential streets to the east, a park and YMCA to the west, and a golf course to the south. On the north side of campus, fronted by 49th Avenue, is the site being examined in this proposal. The site is currently an open grass field.

The purpose of this proposal is to imagine what urban design could be applied to this space.

Proposal at-a-glance

The design presented in this proposal includes three major features, an open flex space, and both permanent and temporary seating in between.

Intended outcomes

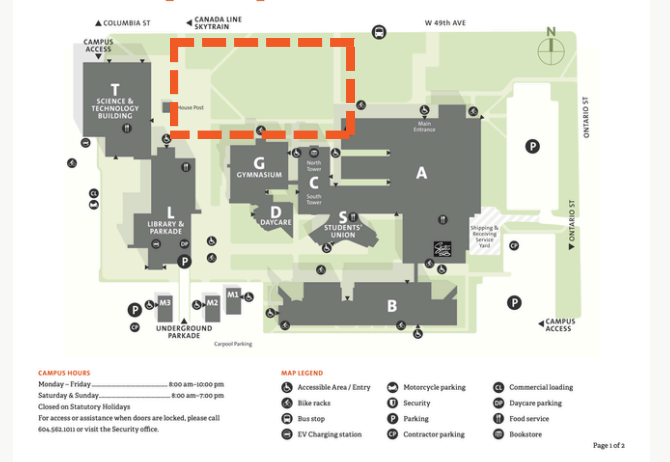
- Make the site more usable and welcoming
- Make the site more attractive
- Create more value for the community
- Facilitate a safe and comfortable place for rest, study, socializing, ceremony, performance, and more



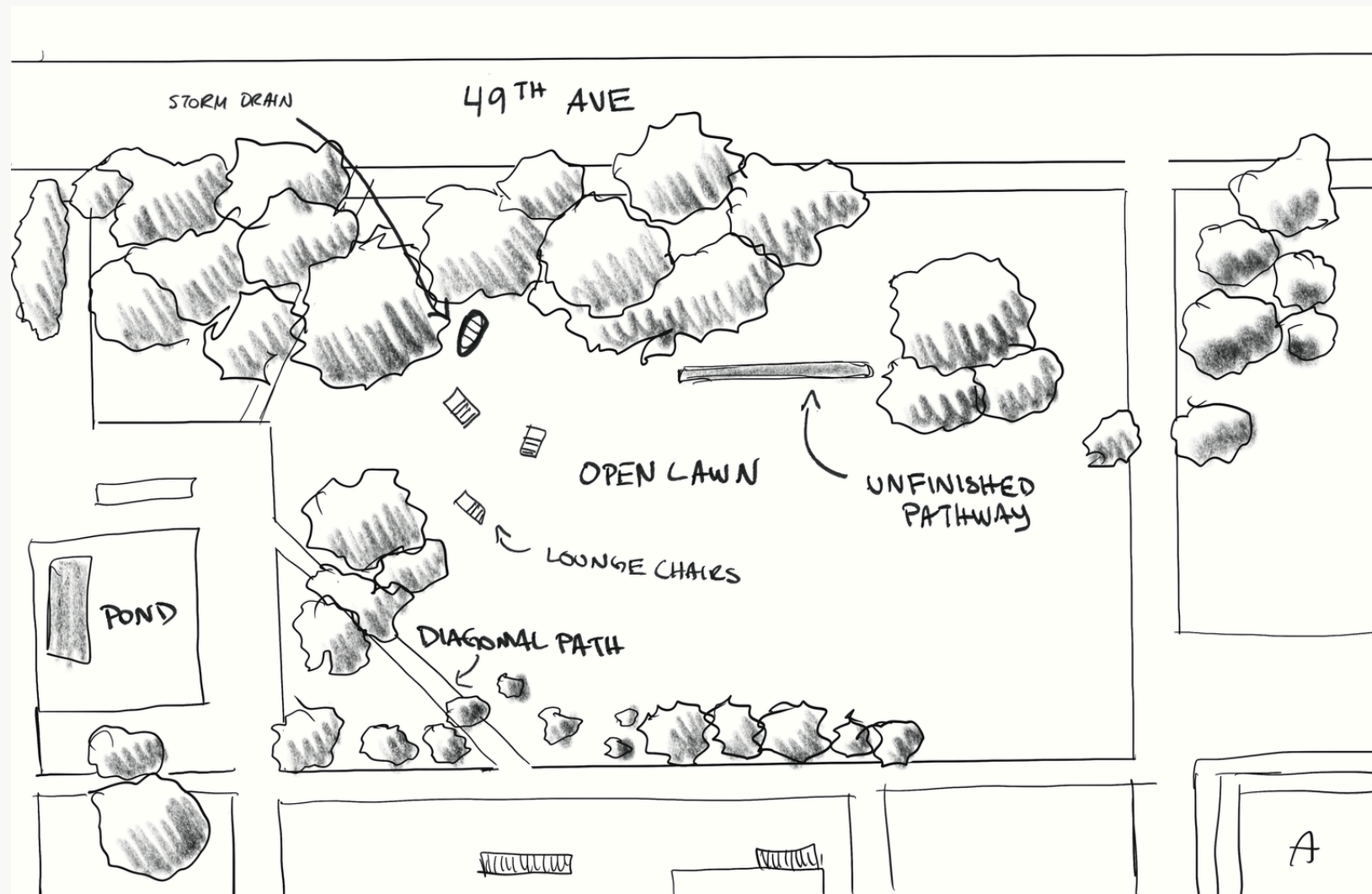
Intended users

- Students
- Employees
- Nearby residents
- Indigenous people
- Musqueam First Nation

Main Campus Map



SITE ANALYSIS



Site description

- Approx. 316 square metres
- Open grass with trees around the border
- Sidewalks around the perimeter and a diagonal throughway to/from transit
- Mainly flat with a slightly depressed storm drain
- Fronted by 49th Avenue, no bus stops on segment
- Very few non-permanent lounge chairs
- Excellent sunlight all day

Current uses

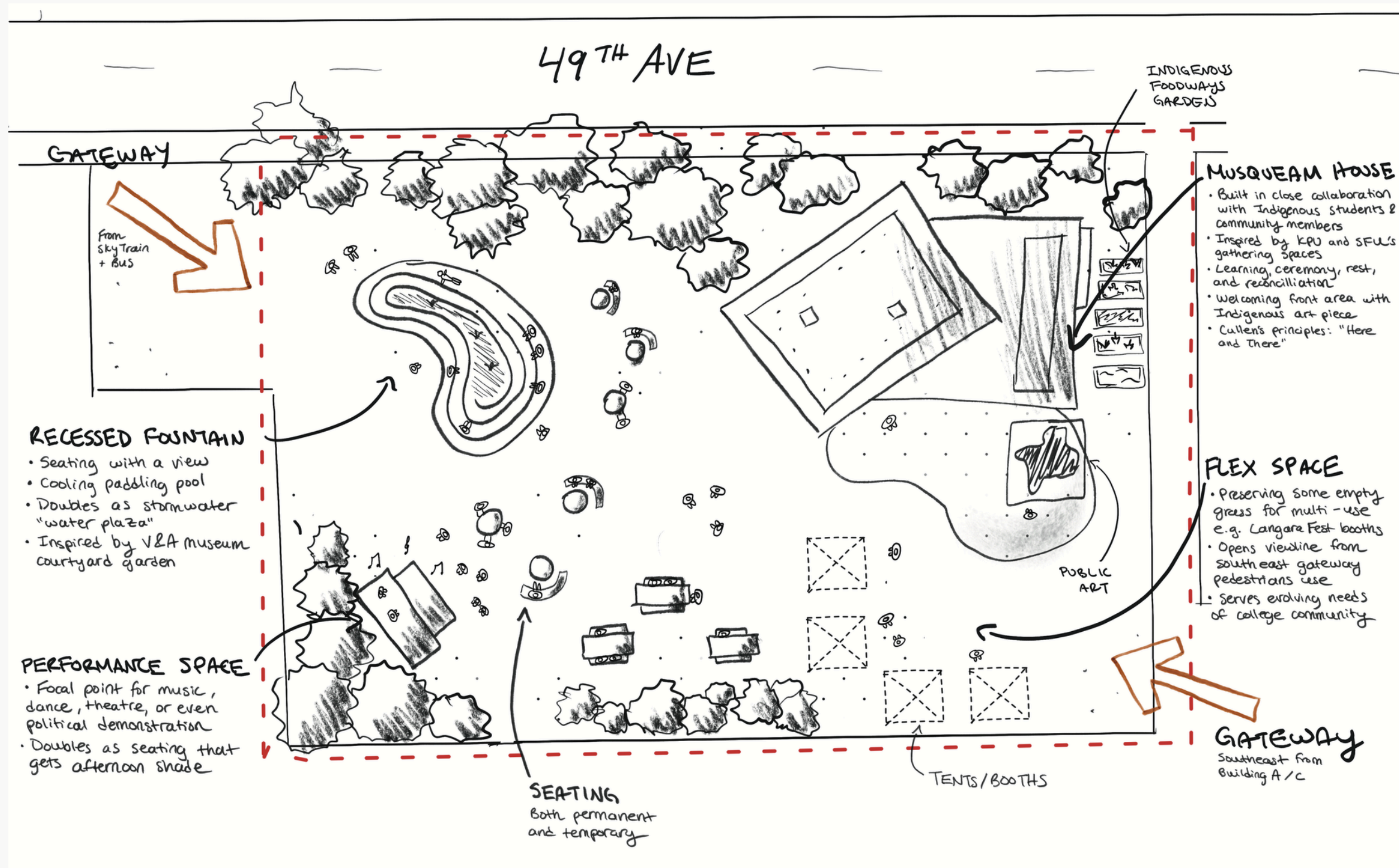
- **Challenge: Overall under-utilized and lacking value to the community**
- Students sit on the minimal chairs provided
- Grass used as a flex space for events like LangaraFest, where tents and activities are set up in addition to other areas of campus
- In the summer, it may be used for lying or sitting down to sun bathe or socialize

“People do not use city open space just because it is there, and because city planners and designers wish they would.”

– Jane Jacobs



DESIGN CONCEPT



Summary

The proposed design aims to maximize the available open space, while providing areas for flexible use that can evolve with the needs of the community.

Combining current foot traffic patterns and elements of the new design, two corners will function as gateways to the space.

The focal point is the Musqueam House, a gathering space which centres the ancestral and contemporary dimensions of the land Langara sits on.

DESIGN CONCEPT



Musqueam House

Investing in the creation of a gathering space is a tangible action towards Indigenous reconciliation. It could fulfill many aspects of a good place: sociability, uses and activities, and image, with the overarching dimension of creating a dedicated, Indigenous-centred space on campus.

The purpose and design of the space should be defined through consultation with Indigenous students and Nations. For example, the goal of the KPU Gathering Place is to create an inviting space for all students that support social and educational activities. The design concept is inspired by the SFU First Peoples' Gathering House (above) which is designed as a modern interpretation of a Coast Salish longhouse.

Public Art

For those on campus who may not go inside the house often, there is a welcoming open space in front which includes a prominent public art piece, which would help educate students and employees about the histories of the land and where we stand today.

Indigenous Foodways Garden

The current site is quite flat and has good sunlight, so a garden is included. This is an example of how sustainable food systems can be integrated into the site.

KPU provides training and research services for Indigenous groups to further their food sovereignty goals. An on-campus garden could be a simple, effective catalyst for similar initiatives that serve Musqueam students and the broader community.

Here and There

Musqueam House, in relation to the whole site, reflects Cullen's principle of "Here and There", creating a clear distinction between foreground, middle-ground, and background elements as it's the tallest and largest feature.





DESIGN CONCEPT

Recessed Fountain

The main inspiration for this feature is the John Madejski Garden at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, UK (right). This lively space is free to the public. On hot days at Langara, the fountain may attract local children, seeing that more dense housing is being built across the street. During heavy rain events, the fountain doubles as a “water plaza” like those seen in Rotterdam (above). Green infrastructure like this helps achieve climate resilience on campus while providing a pleasant place to sit.

Performance stage

Most of the time, this elevated platform acts as seating, with the benefit of afternoon shade.

It’s main purpose is to host music or theatre performances. It may also serve as a place for student political gatherings, which are a keystone of post-secondary life. Spaces like this facilitate rest, school pride, interaction, celebration, ceremony, arts & culture, and political action.

Tables and chairs

A mix of permanent and temporary seating strategically fill the gaps between major features. This allows for some flexibility during events, creating a dynamic space for studying, rest, and socializing. Open grassy areas leave room for beach towels and blankets during warm months, and welcomes students to exercise or rest in a visually pleasing, lively environment.

