

# Conceive, Create and Consummate Outdoor Spaces

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**Abstract:** *Landscape of any outdoor space creates an identity and setting for any architectural project. Spatial organisation of built - unbuilt and their symbiotic relation established right at stage of site planning, creates a right canvas for the various landscape elements to perform. Major roles include contextual connections, functional relationship, microclimatic improvisations, ecological and environmental concerns, aesthetic appeal with seasonal changes and envisaging the emotional bond. Outdoor spaces especially with the built environment when tackled as after thoughts, lose the thematic binding of the entire site. This paper studies and analyses the engagement of landscape design thought process from the conception to creation to consummation. The research process, would be using the author's projects as sample case studies.*

**Keywords:** Landscape, Outdoor spaces, Site planning, Built-unbuilt.

## Landscape as outdoor designs:

Landscape Architecture involves the spatial organisation of outdoor spaces to meet human needs and desires, while protecting or enhancing natural environments and processes. Its major role is to create a balanced fabric for human habitat in micro and macro context, where needs are undergoing changes with time. Therefore landscapes usually need to function and perform in diverse ways for different people.

Landscape of any outdoor space creates an identity and setting for any architectural project. Right at the site planning stage, symbiotic relation of built and unbuilt is established which creates an appropriate canvas for the various landscape elements to perform. Performance of the assembly of landscape elements is highlighted or accentuated by the thematic binding associated to the space creation as aim of the designer. The aim being creating places that meet social, environmental, cultural, aesthetic and practical requirements.

One of the larger aim for the landscape design is also to create *Sensation of Green* as a tool to stimulate human mind and its behaviour in presence of nature. "Sensation of Green is about the mental process like touching, seeing, hearing, or smelling, resulting from the immediate stimulation of landscape forms, plants, trees, wind and water. Sensation of Green triggers a feeling of scale, cheerfulness, calmness and peace. The spatial performance of Sensation of Green is created by a physical interaction between the language of space and the language of nature"

## Landscape elements and morphology

Outdoor designs are conceived and illustrated by the landscape elements of 'landform' or 'topography', 'vegetation', 'water' and 'structures' being the primary physical material with which designers create landscape form and fabric. In any design, subtle integration of these elements enables exploration of various themes and purposes.

Broadly following morphological parts can be identified to create outdoor /landscape designs:

- **Landscape fabric:** It relates to the contextual connections for the design of landscapes. These can be physical, environmental and social contexts which give possibilities of many 'design scales' to be explored. It also identifies the qualities as desirables for designs with the holistic integration of spaces, paths, edges, foci and thresholds and the integration of landform, vegetation, structures and water to make places.

- **Spaces:** The spaces explore the enclosure and definition of distinct areas of land, connected to built or in isolation, for human activities. Spaces are considered the primary means by which landscapes are conceived, created and consummated. Design considerations in the creation of spaces allow them to be organised, understood, used and experienced.

- **Paths:** These are linear places of movement in the landscape. The emphasis here is on pedestrian environments. Like spaces, paths are also considered primary design forms that help in carving out the spaces and influence the use and experience of landscapes.

- **Edges:** The edges explore transitional linear places where one space or landscape part becomes another. Often neglected in design, edges are considered primary structural components of landscapes because of their integrative and social functions. Edges, clear cut or blended as per the design considerations, help creating changes in experiences.

- **Foci:** 'Foci' refers to differentiated, contrasting or unique forms or places in the landscape that possess cultural, social, practical and orientation functions because of their visual distinction or location. Design functions of foci is bring all the visual attention of user, towards it.

- **Thresholds:** Thresholds are spatial components of the landscape which provide for integrated, subtle and complex transitions through the landscape. Thresholds are relatively small spaces which 'sit' between larger spaces or between buildings and landscape. Like edges, thresholds 'knit' the fabric of landscape together, but unlike edges they are 'centered' rather than linear spaces.

- **Detail:** Detail explores the 'close-up' 'tactile' or 'immediate' scale of landscape evoking sensory experience through abstract elements (colour, texture, pattern) and topography, vegetation, structures and water.

## Design Approaches

Outdoor designs can be based on the various purposes assigned to it. Design considerations like ecological and environmental concerns, microclimatic improvisations, guide the design differently than the considerations like ‘sense of place’ ‘identity of space’ ‘aesthetic appeal’ etc. Hence there can be multiple approaches to the landscape design. These can be identified as:

### A MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DESIGN

While landscapes are living, dynamic, ‘bio-cultural’ systems, they can also be thought of as complex, spatial ‘structures’. It works with three-dimensional design sensibility by exploring and defining the physical form of landscape as ‘*material*’ for design. Integrated spatial structure of whole landscape along with the context, refers to ‘*Fabric*’, while ‘*form*’ refers to the components or parts that make up this fabric (as mentioned previously). Together ‘form and fabric’ create a language of morphological design approach of landscape that is useful for visual-spatial design thinking and awareness. Landscape context defines the parameters of design and knitted with other elements it creates the landscape used and experienced by people in distinct ways.

### Case study: Public garden in Panvel, Sector-11, Navi Mumbai

Context: Existing unkempt garden area with lots of mature trees. Surrounded by road and residential building of various scales and site was prone to trespassing because of open edges.



Figure 1: Existing situation of garden

Design Considerations: To re-create garden with spatial arrangements housing activities for various age groups, at different times. Also to create a landscape using existing trees, having ‘sense of green’ with suitable visual and physical connects and disconnects to the surroundings.

Design Outcome: Central water feature was created as ‘foci’ and connecting space to rest other activity spaces created by paths or vegetative edges.



Figure 2: Schematic plan of garden



Figure 3: Water fountain as ‘focal point’; Existing trees with plant beds and seatings along it, used as tectoral ‘edges’ to play area.



Figure 4: Seating areas and Amphitheatre as ‘threshold’ to the community lawn

### AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO DESIGN

This approach to design means an ‘experiential’ quality of landscape design that humans experience with the help of all elements. These experiences of landscape are through moving in and around it, stopping, looking, feeling, touching, talking, eating, sheltering, and remembering. In a nutshell whole idea rotates around evoking emotions in the users mind, thru ‘form and fabric’ of landscape. ‘Sense of place’ ‘Image ability’ ‘Serenity’ etc are such ideas which create the design considerations for experiential landscapes. The design intentions are to make connections between experience and design.

### Case study: Anand Vihar, Bhakt Niwas Sankul, Shegaon

Context: Complex for accommodation of pilgrims in 8.5 acres, in the tier three religious tourism city. Physical constraints were of very deep black cotton soil, existing set of buildings and the

shape of the site. Environmental constraints of rain shadow area in hot and dry climatic zone and the low budget constraints were instrumental to form design considerations.

**Design Considerations:** To create a **spiritual environment** where architecture and landscape participate in its creation. Conceptualising spaces for various activities, participating in microclimate improvisations was prime consideration.

**Concept:** To create a spiritual environment, it was important to touch our base to social and cultural philosophies, where nature is looked forwards for harmony of life and where nature is considered 'sacred'. The key idea of design was to work with concepts of landscapes where nature dominates and built envelop becomes part of entire landscape setup. The prime purpose of design was to provide differentiated spaces for various activities and articulate them in such a way that they connect emotionally with tourist, such emotional content of the place is carried in people's mind from here to back home.

Walk able complex with continuous green spaces across the site to provide a green palette to the site became the basis of the design. The green was not only for aesthetical purpose but its ecological aspects of interdependence of flora and fauna needed to be taken care of.

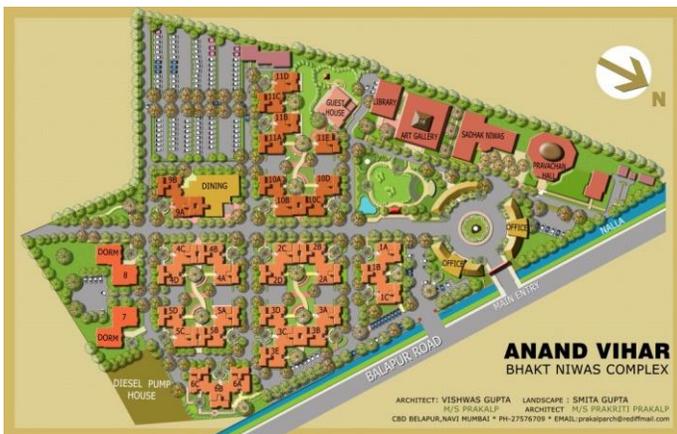


Figure 5: Master plan



Figure 6: Entry node created by amenity buildings; Sculpture of bigger than the human scale accentuates the focal point. Paving patterns and framing elements, further highlights the focus.



Figure 7: Tree lined paths edged with vegetation to experience the sense of green



Figure 8: Interconnected green courtyards space created as an outdoor space for a pocket to have an experience of interaction space.



Figure 9: Vegetation textures used at broader and smaller scale.

#### A VISUAL APPROACH TO DESIGN

Landscape architects learn to design primarily through visual-spatial information. It explores conceptual and physical dimensions of landscapes and design through drawings. Based on the creative thinking and understanding of design vocabulary a kind of visual canvas is prepared. It provides an annotated visual narrative and structure through which landscapes can be interpreted, understood and conceived in design.

#### Case study: Anand Visawa, Bhakt Niwas Sankul, Shegaon

**Context:** Complex with two existing buildings refurbished from adivasi school to guest accommodations for pilgrims. Further addition of bhakt niwas buildings to have an occupancy of around 2500-3000 in 16.5 acres. Environmental constraints of rain shadow area in hot and dry climatic zone and the low budget constraints were the keys to form design considerations.

**Design Considerations:** Prime consideration was to integrated strong architectural character of buildings in landscape with the idea of image making for the Complex. Congregation spaces, interaction spaces and other activity spaces were to be created in given frame of spaces in existing setup. Discipline in public behaviour through landscape was also set as parameter to design.

Concept: Hierarchy of open spaces created right from the inner building courtyards to interaction spaces to the central plaza. Visual means of designs like lines, patterns, colours were implemented to achieve the design goals. Monotony of the introvert planning of building was broken by visually pleasing outdoor spaces expanding all over and connecting all the pockets of developments.



Figure 10: Visual approaches like central axis, plaza with the focal points were the keys to achieve the design goals. Landscape was used as a foreground to highlight the architectural character of buildings and the skyline.



Figure 11: Pathways and other elements to create visual vistas and visual frames.

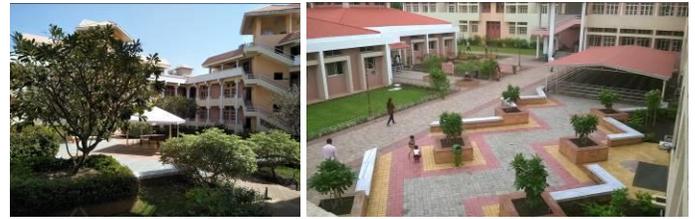


Figure 12: Aesthetic appeal to spaces created by building enclosures achieved through vegetation at some places whereas other places had strong play of lines, colours and patterns

### Conclusion

Outdoor designs are the creations of landscape setting for architectural built and unbuilt spaces thru the engagements of landscape elements. The paper demonstrates the potential of the linear process of conceiving, creating and consummating spaces throughout an analysis of three cases. Any design approach taken would create the appropriate landscape 'form and fabric', only when part of the thought processes right from the conceptual stages not an afterthought.

### References

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