



Landscape Architect

Job Description

A Landscape Architect **plans and designs outdoor spaces** such as parks, campuses, residential areas, and public spaces. They combine **creativity, environmental awareness, and technical planning** to create landscapes that are functional, sustainable, and visually appealing.

Salary

WA Average

Entry — \$73,000

Middle — \$97,000

Top — \$117,000

Core Tasks

- **Designs** outdoor spaces by **creating plans, layouts, and drawings** for landscapes and public areas
- **Coordinates** with clients and project teams to **review designs, requirements, and timelines**
- **Supports construction** implementation by **reviewing plans, permits, and site progress**.

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Primarily office-based, working on **design plans, drawings, permitting** documents, and project coordination.
- **Travel**
Travels locally to **project and construction sites**, including **meetings** with clients and contractors; occasional regional travel.

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

BA or BS in Landscape Architecture, Environmental Design, or a related field

Licensing

Professional license required after completing education and supervised work experience.

Pre-Job Preparation

Internships or entry-level positions assisting with landscape design, drafting, and site planning.

Experience

Soft Skills

- Creative problem-solving
- Communication & collaboration
- Attention to detail
- Project organization & time management

Technical Skills

- Landscape design and drafting software
- Site planning and land analysis
- Understanding of plants, materials, and environmental systems
- Project documentation and permitting support



Career Path: Marta Olson

About Me

Program Manager for Our Green Duwamish
at King County Stormwater

Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture –
University of Washington

High School Life

"In high school, I definitely had not figured out what I wanted to do for a career. I liked school, and I did the **International Baccalaureate program**. I did all of this **coursework** in all these **different subjects**, which was interesting, but I don't know how necessary it was."

College Choices

"I went to Whitman College for undergrad, which is a small **liberal arts school**, and I took classes in all different disciplines. While I was in college, I ended up actually **majoring in theater** from Whitman. I worked in **theatrical costumes** and **wardrobe** in Seattle for like eight or nine years after that. Later, I decided I wanted to go back to school, and I discovered what **landscape architecture** was. I did not know that it existed as a profession before then. I found out that the University of Washington had a program, and I got my **master's degree in Landscape Architecture** there."

Into the Real World

"I worked in the **private sector** pretty briefly for like a year and a half, and didn't really love that, and knew I wanted to come back into the public sector. I had a short-term temporary position with King County as a **noxious weed technician**. I was working with the Green River knotweed specialist, and we were floating on a kayak **starting upstream** and **coming downstream**, trying to kill knotweed in the floodplain. It definitely gave me an appreciation for what a watershed is.

There was a position that opened up in the stormwater Capital Group as a **project manager**, and I did that for like three or four years. I just recently moved from a project manager to now a **program manager**. I really love working in **stormwater at King County**, and I genuinely feel like the work that I do helps **improve our community** and the **environment**."

About My Job

"We all want to do good for the community."

Pros

- "I'm getting the **opportunity to guide** what exactly all of the job duties entail."
- "I have a lot more **creativity** than I did when I was working for more of a design firm."
- "We all want **to do good** for the **community** and for the **environment**."
- "I genuinely feel like the work that I do **helps improve** our community and the environment."
- "There's sort of that **flexibility**."
- "It's great to feel in **control** of some level of the work that I'm doing."

Cons

- "Working in the **government**, there's always going to be **bureaucracy**."
- "Things that should be **simple get very complicated** because of regulations or other agencies."
- "There are a lot more people who have to be **bought into what I'm doing**."
- "I don't have a very **clear objective** of this is what you do and just go do it."
- "It can be sometimes bit **frustrating** that you don't have the **power to make decisions** and run with them."

Fieldwork

- "When I go out to a site, it's usually an existing **stormwater facility**."
- "I'll go out and **visit one**, especially if we're under construction for a big **construction project**."
- "I go out in the field to look at that facility **how it's working** and **how it can be improved**."
- "That can be a combination of **gray infrastructure** (pipes and vaults) and **green infrastructure** (stormwater wetlands)."

Office Work

- "My job is predominantly an **office based** job at a **computer**."
- "I do a lot of **coordinating** with a lot of different people."
- "That can involve looking at **engineering plans**, looking at **drawings**, and **reading reports**."
- "I helped them out **doing a planting plan**."
- "I am still working predominantly **telework**."
- Trying to **find partners** and **figure out** who's also working in that area."

Skills

- "You have to be **organized**."
- "**Understand** enough about **engineering** to talk to engineers."
- "**Understand ecology, plants, habitat**, and what is going to thrive on a site."
- Have some sort of **spatial awareness** to be able to look at **plan drawings** and understand how that corresponds to an actual site."
- "Being able to **find the people** who have the answers that you need."
- "**Communication** is really important."

Education/Experience

- "I did the **International Baccalaureate** program."
- "I worked as a **project manager** in the stormwater Capital Group."
- "I worked in the **private sector** pretty briefly."
- "While I was in college, I ended up actually **majoring in theater**."
- "I got my Master's Degree in **Landscape Architecture** at the **University of Washington**."
- "I just recently moved from a project manager to now a **program manager**."

The Future of **Stormwater & Green Infrastructure**

"Now there is an understanding of how important it is to improve water quality."

"The **field of stormwater** is actually really kind of at an **inflection point** where what we're doing is going to shift a lot. Historically, stormwater has been very **gray infrastructure driven**, where we just tried to get the water off the roads into pipes as quickly as possible, and then into water bodies, streams, rivers and the Puget Sound. Now there is an understanding of how important it is to **improve water quality**, to get rid of the pollutants that are coming off the road, and also to **slow down the water**, so we're not just shooting all this water through ravines and causing erosion.

There is a shift towards green stormwater infrastructure, which is **combining some elements** of heavily engineered stormwater systems with the natural environment, using more **plants as filtration** instead of doing that mechanically. There is interest in doing more multi benefit projects, where it's a stormwater facility that also has some **habitat features**, that is open to the public, and actually a park as well. I think it's really important in an **urban setting**, where a lot of things have been **developed** already, to be able to accomplish a lot of things all in one project."

About Sustainability Ambassadors

We are here to **RAPIDLY ADVANCE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**. Empowering **YOUTH** to catalyze community sustainability, **TEACHERS** to integrate rigor with relevance for real-world impact, **COMMUNITY** to drive collective impact.

We support a year-round training program for over 60 highly motivated middle and high school youth, a Teacher Fellows Program, City-County CAP internships, and college-level interns, and work with hundreds of educators to design new models of problem-based, place-based learning around **a shared vision of educating for sustainability**.

Your Green Jobs Future

Ready to explore your future in green jobs? Use [Map your Career](#) to map your trajectory!

Find career opportunities near you now! Use [Career Connect - Washington's](#) tool to find programs to build your career skills.

Interested in a future in solar? Take a look at the [Solar Jobs Census](#) to track solar job growth nationwide.

Explore [RVC's opportunities](#) to work with organizations led by communities of color.

Dive into the [Center of Excellence for Clean Energy's](#) robust career tools in the sustainable energy sector.

Grow your professional sustainability skillset with the [Seattle Youth Good Program](#).

See Seattle's [Clean Energy Resources Map](#) to examine what the city is planning for a greener energy future.

Check out the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) to explore the sector's current opportunities. :

Funder Acknowledgement



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Wastewater Treatment Division

