

2 Benefits of protecting Garry oak areas during land development



Protecting Garry oak areas adds to the quality of life for the entire community. Careful development and management can bring financial rewards for developers and property owners.

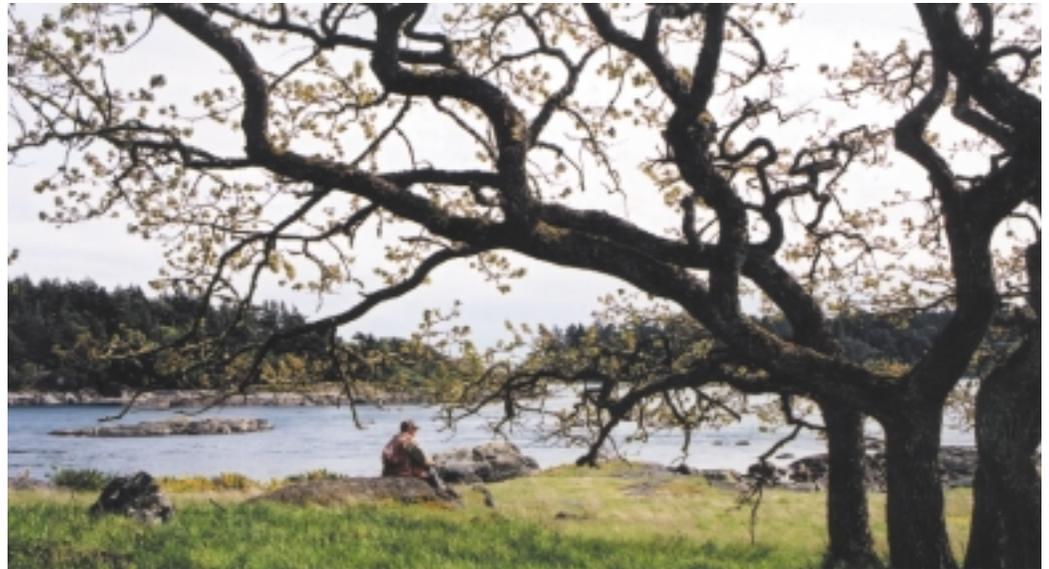
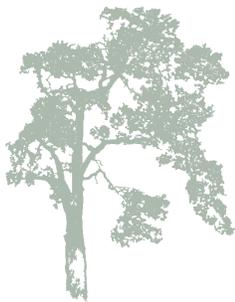


Photo left: Chris Junck. Photo top: Fred Hook

Garry oak areas provide scenic beauty and outdoor opportunities.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER BENEFITS FOR DEVELOPERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

- **HIGHER PROPERTY VALUES:** Properties adjacent to greenspace and properties with trees are worth 5–20% more than properties without these assets.¹
- **FASTER SALES:** Properties near protected greenspace tend to sell more quickly. The U.S. National Association of Home Builders encourages the retention and planting of trees because it increases the marketability of new developments.
- **REDUCED COSTS:** If buildings are clustered in order to protect a natural area on part of the site, there may be lower costs for land clearing and new infrastructure. Cluster development can reduce the capital costs of subdivision development by 10–33%.
- **TAX ADVANTAGES:** Land given for conservation purposes can result in significant tax advantages for the donor.² Gifts of land or an interest in the land (such as a conservation covenant) can make the donor eligible for a tax credit, or the elimination of taxable capital gains. Corporate donors can deduct the amount of their gift directly from their taxable income, while the value of an individual's gift is converted to a non-refundable tax credit.³ Unused portions of the credit or deduction may be carried forward for up to five years, and 0% of the capital gain is taxed instead of the usual 50%.⁴ Examples of tax benefits can be seen on the Ecological Gifts website (www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde/).
- **FASTER PLANNING APPROVALS:** Greenspace protection often helps to create local support for a proposed development. Earning respect and support from a community can greatly speed up the approvals process, and avoid unnecessary and costly delays.

¹ See Sheet 7 for sources of statistics used in this section.

² See information on conservation covenants and land donation on Sheet 7.

³ Each situation is unique; legal and tax advice should always be sought.

⁴ For advice on ecological gifts contact the Canadian Wildlife Service, (604) 940-4700.

- **RECOGNITION:** Some conservation organizations are promoting developments that include sound conservation initiatives. Developers who are seeking a LEED®⁵ certification for their development can earn LEED points through the protection of natural areas.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- **A SENSE OF COMMUNITY:** People who live near greenspace tend to live in their houses for a long time. This results in more stable neighbourhoods and a greater sense of community.
- **BETTER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH:** Protection of greenspace can create recreational opportunities that encourage people to enjoy the outdoors. Tranquil places to ‘get away from it all’ provide documented mental health benefits. Research shows that hospital patients recover more quickly with a view of greenspace than if they are looking at a wall, and that office workers with a view of greenspace experience greater job satisfaction and productivity than colleagues with no such view.
- **ATTRACTIVE TO BUSINESSES:** Greenspace, environmental protection and recreation opportunities are features that help to attract new businesses to a community.
- **GOOD FOR BUSINESS:** Trees in shopping areas encourage people to shop longer, buy more and pay more for goods.
- **VALUABLE ‘ECOSYSTEM SERVICES’:** Healthy ecosystems provide communities with services such as stormwater management, filtering of pollutants from air and water, and storage of carbon (that would otherwise contribute to climate change). For example, for every 1,000 trees, surface runoff (stormwater) is reduced by nearly 3.8 million litres.
- **IMPROVED AIR QUALITY:** A study in Puget Sound found that the region had lost 37% of tree canopy coverage over the previous 25 years. This lost tree canopy would have removed about 13 million kg of pollutants from the atmosphere annually — a service valued at US\$95 million. A study of the Still Creek watershed in



Photo: Hal Gibbard

Burnaby found that the watershed lost 0.1% of its tree cover between 1986 and 2002. This seemingly small change resulted in a loss of about \$2 million annually in air pollution management, and a loss of about 300 tonnes of carbon storage per year.

- **CLEANER WATER:** Treed areas help to filter surface runoff, reducing pollutants that would otherwise go into streams and creeks.

For more information on benefits related to the protection of natural areas, see *The HAT Manual: Protecting Natural Areas in the Capital Region*.⁶



Photo: Chris Junck

⁵ Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. For more information see www.cagbc.org.

⁶ Available from the Habitat Acquisition Trust www.hat.bc.ca.



**Garry Oak
Ecosystems
Recovery Team**

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