

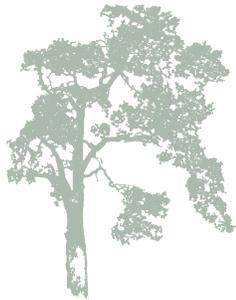


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Success stories: benefits of protecting Garry oak areas during land development



Good planning to maintain healthy Garry oak areas during land development benefits everyone.



These success stories illustrate how the protection of Garry oak areas during land development has benefited the developer, the local community and the natural environment.

MATSON LANDS, ESQUIMALT

The Matson property in Esquimalt represents one of the last remnants of Garry oak ecosystems in the Victoria harbour area. Several development proposals were rejected by the community and the local council because of the threat to this ecosystem.



The Swallow's Landing development has been selling fast, and at premium prices

Photo left: Todd Carnahan Photo top: Hal Gibbard

Mandalay Developments worked in partnership with the Friends of Matson Lands, Habitat Acquisition Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Township of Esquimalt to create a win-win scenario. Mandalay donated a one-hectare parcel, the Matson Conservation Area, to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). NCC developed a management plan, conducted a baseline inventory, and placed a conservation covenant on the property before turning it over to the Habitat Acquisition Trust as a demonstration site for urban ecosystem conservation. At the same time, the Township of Esquimalt modified the zoning on the upper portion of the development site, allowing a 102 unit, multi-storey development with stunning harbour views.

Developer David Price is happy. Not only was he able to get the project approved with support from the community, the Swallow's Landing development has been selling fast, and at premium prices.

Mandalay built a public pathway from the development to the Westsong Walkway (a public trail along the harbour front). One innovative feature is that the path is on a raised metal grid that allows water and light to penetrate. This means that wildflowers can grow beneath the trail. Demonstration nativescape gardens show the visiting public just how beautiful a native garden can be.

AJ FORSYTH STEEL DISTRIBUTION CENTRE, NANAIMO

AJ Forsyth, a metal cutter and supplier, purchased industrial land in Nanaimo that included a former storage yard and a stand of Garry oak trees with a reasonably intact understorey. The City of Nanaimo required the developer to come up with a plan to protect the trees and to meet the City's landscape and screening requirements for the building.



Photo: Pat Harrison

An eye-catching feature.

Initial site plans would have resulted in some loss of the Garry oak area due to layout and grading issues. Landscape architect Pat Harrison persuaded the company to adjust their site plans in a way that allowed them to retain the Garry oak area, improve vehicle access (especially for large trucks) and to save money on blasting and fill costs.

The project also resulted in habitat restoration initiatives. Invasive plants such as blackberry and daphne-laurel were removed, allowing native rose and oceanspray to re-establish. Landscaping has incorporated plants native to this type of dry Garry oak habitat as much as possible, and more than 30 Garry oak trees were planted on the site. A manual describing post-construction care and management of the landscape was also prepared to help the company manage the existing and restored Garry oak areas over the long term.

Another eye-catching feature of this development is a large work of art featuring a Garry oak tree made from cut steel. The artwork — created by Harrison and cut by AJ Forsyth — has served as a creative feature on the side of an otherwise blank corrugated wall, as well as an advertisement for the company's product that has led to many new sales.

AJ Forsyth has been delighted with the resulting 'look' of the site, which has won design awards from the City.

LAKESIDE VILLAGE, VIEW ROYAL

Unity Developments purchased a 10 hectare development site next to the Trans-Canada Highway in the Town of View Royal. Part of the land was in use as a landscape nursery, part was undeveloped second-growth Douglas-fir forest — and sitting in the middle was a one-hectare remnant of Garry oak woodland.

The challenge was to find a way to allow the development to proceed, while protecting both the Douglas-fir forest and the Garry oak area.

Unity Developments worked with the Town of View Royal to create a plan that included 23 single homes and 149 condominiums, as well as a commercial area. Moving to a condominium-style development allowed the developer to retain the number of units on site, while gifting both the Douglas-fir forest (Nursery Hill Park) and Garry oak woodland (Meadow Park) to the Town as a municipal park. Almost 60% of the site is to be protected as park land.

The developer worked with a biologist and landscape architect to maintain the natural site hydrology, ensuring that stormwater runoff does not increase the surface and ground water flowing through this naturally dry site. The consultants designed hard-surface trails through the parks to keep people off sensitive areas, and removed invasive species (especially daphne-laurel) in the Garry oak woodland. The parks will be managed by the municipality, and a management plan has been prepared to provide information on the best ways to protect the ecosystem values over the long term.

The "rare Garry oak preserve" is seen as an important marketing feature for this new development.



Photo: Judith Callington



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