

PUGET SOUND Business Journal

Business Leaders Get It.

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Smart growth can provide homes, protect land

The Pacific Northwest is and continues to be a desirable place to live and work. Despite a decline in home sales across the nation, our region remains one of the nation's bright spots. It maintains its status as one of the healthiest economies in the country because of our robust business climate, our growing job market and our abundant natural resources.

Throughout our region and state, managing growth to preserve our resources, even during downturns, has been a top priority for governmental, environmental and advocacy groups.

To ensure smart and sustainable development, our region's leaders have adopted strong policies such as the Growth Management Act, as well as other environmental regulations. As these policies have evolved, they have prompted the development community to be more thoughtful and deliberate — which has resulted in more collaborative and innovative projects. Simply put, smart growth requires smarter development.

Key component

One key component of this smart growth is identifying and designing development opportunities that truly fit the surrounding environment. To do this we must understand, embrace and work with the communities in which we work.

We need to be thoughtful, sensitive to our neighbors' needs, environmentally conscientious and, perhaps above all, adaptable. As developers, we must understand the profound impact that our projects can have on people's neighborhoods and livelihoods. With all these things in mind, it is crucial that we be forward-thinking about where, how and what we choose to develop.

In addition, we need to forge positive relationships and work consistently with local policymakers, community stakeholders and home buyers to find creative solutions that address concerns such as transportation, environmental impacts and affordability.

HOUSING HORIZONS



Brian Ross



Wetlands surround

At YarrowBay Group, we are looking for meaningful ways to creatively develop well-designed, compact, urban communities. One example of our efforts is our recent Quinn's Crossing project in Snohomish County. With fewer than 50 home sites, this is a unique project in large part due to its location — the site is surrounded by environmentally sensitive wetlands.

Because of this site's environmental constraints, many developers shied away from it. However, we viewed it as an opportunity to create an extraordinary neighborhood while permanently preserving and protecting vital wetlands.

From the start, we worked closely with the community to create an innovative plan that would not only preserve the existing wetlands, but also add a small community of close-knit residents who will be united in both neighborly proximity and their shared commitment to protecting the beautiful surrounding acreage.

Land protected

The end result is a 114-acre property in which more than 70 percent (80 acres) of the land has been set aside as a permanent Native Growth Protection Area. All future homeowners will literally own and be stewards of this protected land on their individual properties.

To further ensure the sustainability and the environmentally friendly nature of the project, we are requiring that all homes at Quinn's Crossing be Built Green and that all landscaping be natural and pesticide-free.

As evidenced by the cross-collaboration involved in this project, it's clear that, be-

yond the many homeownership benefits of forward-thinking development, compact urban communities can also increase opportunities for environmental stewardship. After all, it's our spectacular natural surroundings here in the Pacific Northwest that brought our families here to live in the first place.

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Having it all

We have a lot to be thankful for here in the beautiful Northwest, and forward-thinking development allows the entire community to have it all: vibrant, compact pedestrian communities, environmental sensitivity and stewardship, stakeholder input and involvement, and a broad range of ownership opportunities — all while maintaining a viable business climate.

While the regional housing forecast has certainly declined from the extraordinary gains we've seen over the past five years, we are still well ahead of the national trends, and all signs indicate that this is only a temporary pause in the market.

People in the Puget Sound region need homes, and developers are here to create them. As one of these developers, I strongly believe that it is my duty and responsibility to our future generations to creatively pursue forward-thinking development while working hand-in-hand with the communities in which we develop.

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