

City's "shoreline restoration" incentives win award

The western border of Sammamish is blessed with a lakeside vista suburban dreams are made of – placid waters, tall fir trees, and a cozy, quiet shoreline dotted with comfortable homes.

And there are more homes on the way. People who want the gentle lap of water to be part of their bedroom community experience are finding ways to place more houses on this peaceful shoreline. And that was part of the challenge as the city began its update of a Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) in 2005.

“Protecting and enhancing our shoreline along Lake Sammamish was very important to both the community at large and the people who owned lake-side property,” Kathy Curry, the city’s wetland biologist, said. “We feel very fortunate that our public involvement process was so helpful. We incorporated ideas from our residents that helped us produce an award-winning ordinance.”

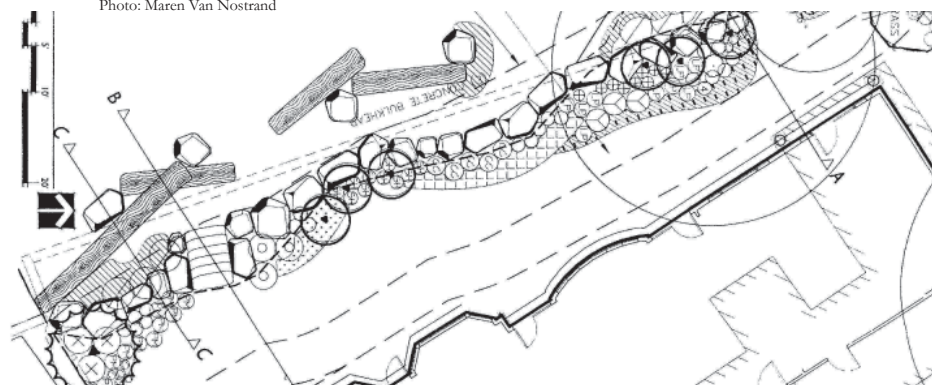
The city won the 2007 “Sustainability” award from the Planning Association of Washington and the state’s chapter of the American Planning Association. The award, bestowed jointly by the two associations, recognized the “shoreline restoration incentives” Sammamish included in its CAO update.

Put simply, after setting a 45-foot shoreline buffer requirement for new development on Lake Sammamish, the city allowed builders to reduce the buffer to as little as 15 feet if they agreed to implement an array of shoreline restoration and enhancement methods. Some of those include re-vegetation, water quality protections, and bulkhead removal.

“The plans we’ve been receiving



Photo: Maren Van Nostrand



Graphic: The Watershed Company

A home on the eastern edge of Lake Sammamish and the design plans submitted to protect and enhance the shoreline next to the house.

from builders are very encouraging,” Curry said. “Our shoreline is going to get healthier as new homes are built or new additions are made to existing homes.”

Like a martial arts expert redirecting the momentum of an opponent, the new ordinance turns the power of growth into a force multiplier for the environment.

“We owe this success to the thoughtful work of the Planning Commission, City Council, staff, and a broad spectrum of residents and community advocates,” Curry said. “It’s

been a broad-based group effort.”

Mayor Mark Cross thinks the benefits will extend beyond Sammamish.

“In addition to making these options available to our residents, I hope the restoration incentives will serve as an example for other communities facing similar challenges,” Cross said. “Just as we have learned on many occasions from the creative work of other communities, I hope others will benefit from this innovative and effective approach in Sammamish.”

(The award-winning code can be viewed at www.ci.sammamish.wa.us.)