

NEW West Bay Interpretive Platform and Pollinator Park

Proposal

The West Bay Residents Association (WBRA) together with the Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) are proposing that the Township of Esquimalt establish a new public wheelchair-accessible **Interpretive Platform and Pollinator Park (IPPP)** on Township property, at the southern end of Garret Place, overlooking the Matson Conservation Area (MCA).

Benefits

- Esquimalt and specifically West Bay's increasing density, much of which is apartment and condo living, means greater demand for new parks and green spaces.
- The unused boulevard land in question is owned by the Township of Esquimalt hence there is no additional land purchase cost to the Township.
- Garret Place terminus is a natural vantage point. It is contiguous to the 100 step staircase access to the West Bay Walkway.
- Located above and sweeping over MCA it is an ideal location for a pollinator park and interpretive learning platform. The MCA is a 2.4-acre protected urban conservation site along Esquimalt's West Bay shoreline, and is the last existing garry oak enclave on the inner harbour.
- The IPPP will enhance public education and foster ecological awareness, which will support long-term stewardship of the MCA lands.
- The IPPP provides a designated area for viewing the MCA which will help minimize foot traffic and disturbance to the fragile MCA habitat.

Concept Drawing and location



Project Roles/Authorities

- HAT – MCA owner/conservation lands manager.
- WBRA – Project proponent, local non-profit society.
- Township of Esquimalt – Landowner, land-use and permitting authority.

If approved, the project will seek input from members of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, if desired and as capacity allows, to ensure that their goals for Matson Conservation Area are reflected.

For further information, please email the West Bay Residents Association at

westbayresidentsassoc@shaw.ca

<https://westbayresidentsassociation.com>

How it all came to be

Matson Lands Preserved Forever (Excerpt September 2005, Volume 11, Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, Kingfisher Newsletter)

The culmination of many years of work was finally realized in June (2005) when the Matson Lands in Esquimalt were preserved. Protected through an innovative partnership of visionary land developers, dedicated local residents and grass-roots conservation organizations, Esquimalt's Matson Lands constitute an exemplary model of successful community-based conservation in an urban setting. Members of the West Bay Residents Association (WBRA) and Friends of Matson Lands (FFL) have championed the conservation of the Matson Lands for nearly ten years. An agreement with Mandalay Developments Ltd, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), the Municipality of Esquimalt and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) has now brought this process to a point where conservation and protection is a reality.

Our management plan for the Matson Lands, developed by HAT, NCC, FML, WBRA, Esquimalt and Mandalay Developments envisions the Matson Lands Conservation Area as: "A remnant example of the endangered Garry Oak woodlands that once dominated Victoria's landscape, the Matson Lands have become an important node in a regional network of protected areas and greenways surrounding Victoria's Inner Harbour and Gorge waterways...the transformation of this overlooked and degraded ecosystem to a healthy, ecologically functioning species-rich, conservation area enjoyed by thousands of people stands as a testament to what community-based conservation can accomplish. The Matson Lands have truly become the crown jewel of the Inner Harbour."

The Matson Lands, which are 1 hectare or 2.4 acres, are now owned and managed by HAT. Over the long-term, management will include rehabilitation of eroded meadow slopes, forested habitats heavily infested with alien species, a public walkway, and interpretive signage. HAT's role as landowner will be to chair the management advisory group and direct the conservation and restoration of this important urban ecosystem.

Special thanks are extended to the Friends of Matson Lands and the West Bay Residents Association whose dreams and tireless efforts were integral to seeing this land conserved. This project was made possible by the forward-thinking donation of the Matson Lands Conservation Area and stewardship funding from David Price of Mandalay Developments Ltd.