Clearidge HOA Landscaping Plan
Fall 2024 Going Forward

Landscaping—Primary Objective: Provide a sustainable, attractive and well maintained border along the Oakes Avenue frontage to the Clearidge Neighborhood.

The following represents a revision of the existing landscaping plan. Its aim is to provide a workable transition from the existing non-native plum, shrub, and ground cover to a complex of plants native to the maritime Pacific Northwest and Anacortes. Native plants offer advantages in that they are accustomed/adapted to our local soil, water, and other environmental conditions. They also contribute to supporting and restoring local habitat conditions that are beneficial to local birds, insects, and other wildlife.

An additional factor in adopting this new landscaping plan is that the existing plum trees are now approximately 40 years old and are in the later stages of their expected lifespan. Over the years some trees have already needed to be replaced and each year contribute to greater and greater costs related to pruning and maintenance. Native plants will be selected that represent more shrub-like growth, including trees having heights less than 20 ft and thus requiring minimal pruning.

The transition from the existing landscaping matrix will be staged over a multi-year period to prevent a sudden disruption in Clearidge's HOA Oakes Avenue visual appeal and to allow a ground-truthing of new candidate native plant species for survivability and growth habits as they are planted and established.

It is expected that this revised landscaping plan will be executed within the dimensions 6of the existing HOA landscaping budget, thanks to savings realized by the cessation of existing plum-tree pruning or tree-replacement requirements. The implementation of the modified landscaping plan may also be accelerated if it can be accomplished within the existing HOA budget.

Candidate native species will be identified that meet the following criteria:

- Minimal water requirements initially and none later
- Maximum height 15 ft (preferably without pruning)
- Deer-resistant
- Compatible with native soil characteristics
- Non-invasive

Some candidate species include:

Shrubs and groundcover

- Oceanspray
- Nootka rose
- Lewis Mock Orange
- Oregon Grape
- California Wax Myrtle
- Red Flowering Currant
- Coyote Bush
- Silk Tassel Bush
- Salal
- Serviceberry
- Kinnikinnick
- Red Huckleberry

Trees

- Rocky Mountain Maple
- Vine Maple
- Cascara
- Beaked Hazelnut

Overall description of approach:

This approach would be implemented over time as allowed by the operating budget. One or more flowering plum trees would be removed each year and replaced with new native trees, shrubs and ground cover. The HOA annual landscaping budget would remain the same during the transition time. The cost savings from the termination of annual plum tree pruning would fund gradual tree removal as well as the acquisition and planting of new native species.

Some unknown additional costs may be incurred during the transition time to support the establishment of new plants. Supplemental watering may be required and deer protection will be necessary during the first several years while new plantings are being established. Most of the plants on the recommended list are considered “deer-resistant,” but practical experience says that no such plants exist in nature, and

consequently some protective caging will be required for the tree species during their initial growth years. Trees and shrubs on the recommended list are tolerant of deer browsing to an extent, and resulting deer browse plants would assume a more shrub-like, but acceptable, growth form. Ideally shrubs would be planted in a hedge row or clumping fashion to allow for better protection of the individual plants within the clump as well as providing for desirable bird habitat.

Some losses should be expected during the new plant establishment. Apparent good plant choices will only be validated after several years of onsite testing. Some recommended species may ultimately prove more viable than others based on experience over time. The best outcome would be to have a wide a variety of species represented over the frontage area. A less formal, more random planting pattern would be implemented to mimic a more natural setting. This is a departure from the current "trees in a row" landscaping.

Planting strategy — First Year (2024):

Initial planting phase for a frontage test plot area - approximately 16 x 75 ft

Planting completed November 2024 in a 16 x 75 ft frontage area.

- 6 Nootka Rose
- 3 Mock Orange
- 3 Snowberry
- 1 Rocky Mountain Maple
- 1 Beaked Hazelnut
- 1 Cascara

Soil water content testing

- Planting following test holes to determine soil moisture status

Acquisition of plants

- 1-2 gallon size; smaller plants are less expensive and have higher success rate
- Plant source: Plantas nativa, Bellingham

Soil preparation

- Holes dug slightly deeper then potted plant and twice as wide.
  (Dig hole deeper to break through surface clay or hardpan to provide for drainage)
- Mix soil thoroughly
- Plants carefully removed from pot and mixed native soil compacted firm to bottom and sides of plant.
- Plant with impending rainfall to avoid the need for “watering in”

Plant spacing

- Tree spacing: 20 ft (minimum) from tree to tree
- Shrubs: plant 5 ft apart (generally) in clump-planting pattern
- Avoid planting within 5 ft of sidewalk

Caging/deer protection

- For trees: provide “turkey wire” caging to 3 ft height (3-5 ft diameter)
- Cages should be secured with quick release twist ties for easy removal

Follow up maintenance (first year only)

- April: mulch around each tree/shrub to retain soil moisture
- June: Assess soil moisture/rainfall to determine summer watering needs
- Periodically monitor for summer soil moisture conditions and apply water when necessary. (The need for supplemental watering is expected only for first year).

Assessing the success of fall 2024 pilot planting

- Mortality from initial planting?
- Deer damage?
- Indicators of plant stress?
- Growth/vigor?
- Consider planting improvements or species changes — lessons learned
    - Soil amendments?
    - Water needs?
    - Deer damage control?
    - Alternative species?

Implementation of Second Year of Native Plant Landscape Plan

- Summer 2025: Remove one or more plum trees from the frontage adjacent to the 2024 test plot. Note: It may be possible to plant this or other year's new plantings prior to plum tree removal if necessitated by budget or timing factors.

- Early fall 2025: Remove shrubs and groundcover in this same area if necessary to provide spacing for approximately 15 trees/shrubs in similar spacing to the 2024 test plot. They may remain if they do not crowd or affect placement of the new plants.

- November: Acquire ~15 new native plants/trees from the species list above in 1-2 gal. pot size for planting when the fall rains have begun and the soil is saturated.

- This second round of planting will be carried out with HOA volunteers with the expectation that lessons learned from two planting cycles will provide the necessary knowledge and experience to pass this responsibility on to the HOA landscaping maintenance contractor for the majority of work necessary to accomplish the transition to the native plant-themed landscaping.

- It is anticipated that extra fees associated with native plant plantings will be offset by reduced pruning expenses (~$2,000 annually) associated with the existing plum trees. The suggested native shrubs and trees will require minimal maintenance other than pruning out dead or broken branches if they become unsightly.

Long Range Landscaping Plan to Completion

- The above plan describes a gradual 5- to 10-year transition from plum tree to native plant-based landscaping. Annual expansion of one or more native plant blocks (e.g. 16 x 75 ft) would take place each year based on fall plantings and associated removal of one or more plum trees. Options are available, however, to accelerate this plan if desired. This could be accomplished by adding additional spring plantings to those in the fall, which could significantly accelerate the timeline to the native plant theme. Spring plantings would, however, likely require mid-summer watering during the first year and represent some associated logistical challenges. The acceleration of native species plantings might also precede the schedule for removal of some of the plum trees. This

may represent an acceptable compromise as one or more plum trees could be removed following native species plantings without their undo harm.

- Plum tree removal will be carried out over time to provide for a gradual visual transition. A pattern of alternate plum tree removal is suggested to further allow for a smoother less abrupt transition over time.

- A full 10 years is expected for maturation of the landscaping and the expression of its full aesthetic potential.

- The actual transition period may depend on plant (plan) success and budget.

- Although most of the shrubs and trees are self-propagating, there may be the need over time for the replacement of some plants. Although the extent of such replacement need is unknown, it is anticipated that it will fall within the existing budget. The advantage of working with native plants is that they are by nature self-sustaining and consequently should require little actual replacement needs.