

- ▶ myDJC
- ▶ Breaking News
- ▶ Traffic
- ▶ Business
- ▼ Construction
  - ▶ Events/Education
  - ▶ People/Companies
  - ▶ Spotlight
  - ▶ Oles Morrison
  - ▶ Project of the Week
  - ▶ Firms
  - ▶ Upcoming
  - ▶ Today's Bid Results
  - ▶ Bidding/RFPs
  - ▶ Building Permits
  - ▶ Rosters **NEW**
  - ▶ FBO/CBD
- ▶ Real Estate
- ▶ A & E
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Machinery
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Weekend
- ▶ Special Issues
- ▶ Public Notices
- ▶ Credit
- ▶ FBO/CBD
- ▶ Classifieds
- ▶ Misc. Services
- ▶ Advertising
- ▶ Place a Legal Ad
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- ▶ Subscribe/Renew
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## Construction Industry Spotlight

January 27, 2005

### Construction Industry Spotlight: Condos trump tanks on Edmonds hillside

*Building on a former fuel farm proved to be a construction and engineering challenge.*

By [TERRY STEPHENS](#)  
Special to the Journal

For decades, the prominent hillside above scenic downtown Edmonds was dominated by 23 fuel tanks. Now the tanks are gone, replaced by the first buildings of the Point Edwards view condominiums.



Photo by Terry Stephens  
Lots for the Point Edwards condos were cut into a hillside overlooking Edmonds. The tricky part was installing the project's utilities on the steep site.

But the dramatic visual changes being wrought by the \$65 million project had plenty of engineering and construction challenges.

"The first phase of condominiums ended up being five projects in one, including all of the infrastructure, the pump station, Pine Street improvements and building an 8,400-square-foot clubhouse as well as the first two condominium buildings," said Ross Woods, executive vice president of Triad Development in Kirkland, who worked with architect Blaine Weber of Seattle's Weber+Thompson.

The first two buildings went on the market in mid-January, and two more will be built soon to create the first phase's 99 units. Ultimately, the site will hold 297 condos ranging from 700 to 2,300 square feet and costing \$289,000 to \$1.38 million.

Fortunately for Triad, soil contamination from the tanks had already been mitigated prior to it buying 23 acres last October for \$9.4 million from Unocal. The Department of Ecology noted the cleanup exceeded state standards.

Some of the steep hillside areas leveled to build the tank farm were incorporated into the site plan for the condos.

Those early site preparation advantages didn't make the rest of the project easy, Woods said.

Even the original concept of an Italian-styled development changed early in the planning after focus groups told Triad they wanted something more compatible with the community. That shifted the final design to a more casual, comfortable look, Weber said.

Woods said the site plan avoided steep slopes and cut into the hillside for the homesites. Overall, he said, the construction was "not very complicated, pretty typical for condominiums." But installing all of the infrastructure for water, sewer and utilities was a major challenge.

"Part of the work included building a huge water main across the Unocal property and under the railroad tracks to the Edmonds marina. Building the water main up that steep hill was a challenge, but Summit Utilities did a great job for us," Woods said.

"Part of the process also included rebuilding a sewer pump station in Woodway, which is adjacent to the Point Edwards site," Woods said. "The facility had to be redesigned to meet new Edmonds utility standards. It was a long design process. The work is under way now and Edmonds has assumed ownership of the pump station."

Triad also had to rebuild Pine Street, which meant dealing with two permitting jurisdictions — the town of Woodway and the city of Edmonds.

Working on sloping roads and flat plateaus for the condo sites was also challenging for the project's contractor, Longitude 122, a construction company formed last summer by Triad, Woods said.

Full development of Point Edwards is expected to take five to six years, he said, depending on the pace of condo sales.

Sales, it appears, may not be one of the project's challenges. Last year, more than 1,100 people signed up to be contacted when the homes began selling and 700 people showed up at the site for a summer preview party.

A soil cleanup program for the lower part of the former 47-acre Unocal site is expected to begin soon. The state and the city have proposed a realigned ferry dock for that property, along with construction of the Edmonds Crossing intermodal terminal that will become a hub for rail, ferry, bus and other transportation.

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