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Campbell River Takes Innovative “Coastal” Approach to Landscaping on 19A Upgrade

As the curbs and sidewalks are now set on the 19A upgrade section of the South Island Highway, the vision for the boulevard and beach landscaping is starting to take shape.

For Pat Harrison, principal landscape architect for the project, this means stocking up on salt-spray resistant plants and getting ready for the winter boulevard plantings that will result in a new look for the ocean-side route.

“The City is going with an innovative coastal approach more often seen in public landscapes in California and on the Oregon coast. It involves using species and materials that visually tie the roadway and the ocean together,” said Harrison, landscape architect of JPH Consultants Inc. JPH Consultants was chosen by RF Binnie and Associates, the consulting engineers, to complete the landscaping requirements of the roadway work tender.

This coastal approach offers a less irrigation-intensive approach than the traditional style of tree-and-flower plantings. The landscaping will incorporate drought-resistant plants, salt spray resistance species and mulch materials that resemble beach gravel.

“The total landscaping approach that the City is using is quite forward looking,” said Harrison. *“It addresses sustainability issues, relates strongly to the shore, and it marks a departure from the norm of planting standard flowers and trees. Most municipalities haven’t arrived at this point yet in their public landscaping, so Campbell River is definitely ahead of the curve on this one. In a Canadian context, and especially for Vancouver Island, this is definitely an innovative approach.”*

For most of the other elements along this stretch of road, such as streetlights and curbing, the design will match those used in the Willow Point area. For landscaping however, a different approach was required. Ron Neufeld, general manager of operations at the City explains: *“The section of 19A in Willow Point was inland, with retail and commercial buildings and no visual link to the Oceanside. Maintaining ocean views was less of an issue. For this section however, the views are directly to the sea as there are no buildings or residences on the ocean side. Residents told us they wanted to highlight this view and not obstruct the clear sightlines to the ocean.”*

The City also wanted to use a more water-wise approach. The traditional practice of planting flowers and trees uses traditional spray irrigation sprinklers. The new landscaped areas on 19A are designed to flourish with drip irrigation, which requires only 10 per cent of the water used with traditional sprinklers.

“This is a less expensive landscaping option. Over the long haul it will require a fraction of the water and a fraction of the fertilizer of traditional plantings,” said Neufeld.

“It’s another example of a City project that links good design with good sustainability practices,” said Mayor Charlie Cornfield. *“I believe these landscaped areas will become a model for other projects along the sea shore. And of course, this seaside approach will greatly enhance this entry into the City.”*

Other specific landscaping challenges on the project involve creating practical and visually pleasing landscaping around the new Simms Creek Pump Station, currently under construction. The challenge in this area was how to creatively use plantings to deter vandals from reaching the building walls, especially on the ocean side of the building that can’t be seen by the road.

“We wanted to plant something draught tolerant with built-in anti vandalism properties,” said Harrison. *“For these reasons we’re planting a wild rose species known as rosa rugosa, which solves our challenge in three ways. It fills the plant bed with something that flowers and is pleasant in summer; once it’s established it is quite thorny and will deter people from entering the bed to reach the building; and finally, it’s very similar and closely related to our native rose. It’s a simple answer to the concerns presented by the lift station area.”*

For more information on the Highway 19A Upgrade project, please visit the City of Campbell River website:

www.campbellriver.ca

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