

The Creation of Dean Park Estates -

THE HISTORY OF A DREAM and a VISION:

Dean Park Estates is one of the largest residential subdivisions in the area and is considered by some to be among the most desirable locations to live on the Saanich Peninsula. From the lushly forested hills, clean, wide streets and carefully manicured properties that delight all manner of passerby, this location has made a notable impression on those people who have visited or called it home.

As the area's architecture suggests, most of the homes were built in the late 1970s through to the late 1990s. The history of Dean Park Estates goes back much further. It was envisioned by land investor John Barrett Montfort in the 1940s as a prime location for premium residential real estate. Much of the area had already been designated a public park named after the late financier and philanthropist John Dean who among others had donated large amounts of the land that formed the park.

Montfort purchased large portions of land surrounding the park with the aim of creating something truly unique on the Saanich Peninsula. Road access to this heavily forested area was only via Dean Park Rd., previously named King Rd. A small number of homes were built along this road over the years, and those remaining are among the oldest within the contemporary Dean Park area. Transforming this rugged mountain road in the forest into what we see today was a process that would require community and local government consultation, approvals, concessions, planning, enormous investment in infrastructure, and risk taking.

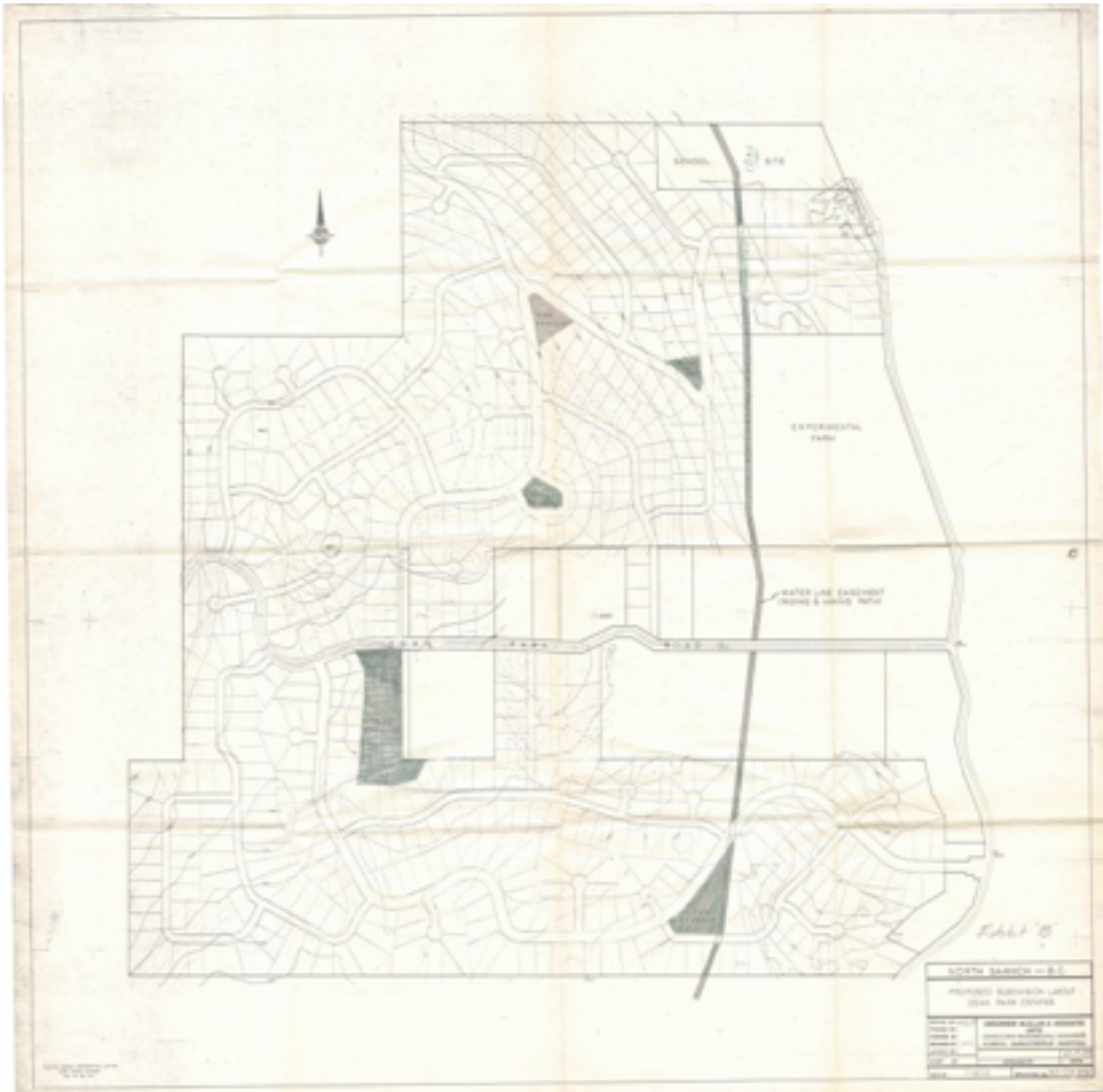
By 1965, the land owned by Montfort was zoned by the Minister of Municipal Affairs as a Comprehensive Residential Zone. Almost immediately a newly formed company, Dean Park Estates Ltd., submitted an application proposing the subdivision. This company was formed by financier Clive Piercy, lawyer Robert McAdam, and builder Hugo Hucker.

The proposal was to build a multi-phase development that could rival other upscale areas including Uplands in Oak Bay or British Properties in Vancouver. Indeed, this subdivision was to be one of the largest and most complex ever seen on the Saanich Peninsula. The original plan was to build a total of 400 lots, each with a minimum lot size of ½ acre. (The original proposal for the subdivision is shown on the next page.)

In 1965, about 30 homes were already under construction in the area. However, they were outside of the Comprehensive Residential zone. By this time, Montfort had also donated portions of his remaining land to the public, growing the size of John Dean Park.

Given the size and scope of the development being planned over the eastern slope of Mt. Newton, the project was not without its detractors. Some vocal members of the community at the time panned the development as a "giant step to destruction" and expressed their concerns to the District - drawing the attention of local media. Some of the concerns were: that the project was too large, that it would contribute to urban sprawl, that it would cause problems relating to sewage and wastewater management, and that it would permanently alter the character of the area.

The proposed Subdivision Plan of Dean Park Estates, July 1965:

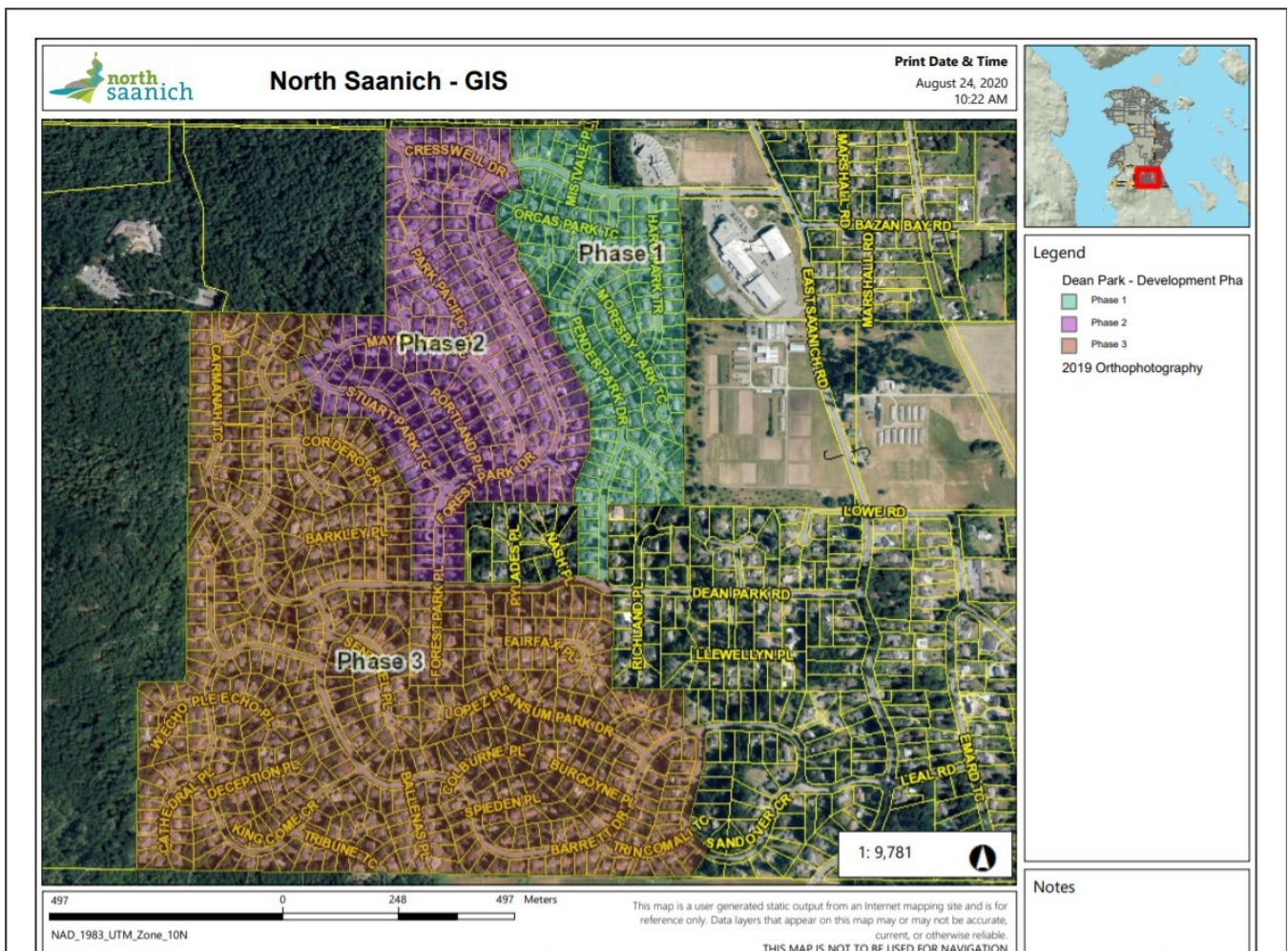


The recently formed District of North Saanich Municipal Council responded to some of the concerns by applying six conditions relating to the project. These included: guarantees of water supply and sewage service, designation of at least 5% of the area to parks and recreation use, and minimum lot and house size. It was at this time that the developer also agreed to aggregate the 5% park land requirement into one parcel of land for the eventual development of the Panorama Recreation Centre.

With the necessary approvals largely in place, the developer of Dean Park Estates, Park Pacific Apartments Ltd., worked for several years, consulting and implementing the engineering details required for the actual construction of the subdivision. One of the streets within Dean Park Estates, Park Pacific Terrace, was named for the company. In 1973, development was put on hold due to an agricultural land freeze in the area, blocking the planned subdivision. The project appeared to be in jeopardy. At the time, Dean Park Estates Ltd. had already invested significant efforts installing engineering infrastructure. Water service consisted of wells and a water tower high up the hill and sewer service consisted of a complete treatment plant on the shoreline at Bazen Bay.

Among other things, the company suggested that the heavily forested and hilly topography of the subdivision area rendered it impractical for agricultural use. After numerous discussions between the developer and local and regional governments, construction eventually began, and occurred in three phases.

The three phases of development of Dean Park Estates.



Phase one began in 1976, and consisted of the homes in the current northeast of the development, with Forest Park Drive being the main road. Phase 2 would begin shortly

thereafter - immediately west of Phase 1 and included Mayneview Terrace, Stuart Park Rd. and the higher portion of Forest Park Drive.

By 1980, most of the homes in phase 1, and some in phase 2 were completed. If viewed from above, these would be easily recognizable today but other areas looked very different. Compared to now, virtually everything south of Dean Park Road remained forested, and a main thoroughfare, Barrett Drive, was little more than a small loop from East Saanich Rd. that ended at the current turnoff on to Sandover Crescent. The photo below shows that Phase 1 was nearly complete, and partial completion of phase 2.

A 1980 Aerial View of Dean Park Estates:



Some areas north of Dean Park Rd. were still undeveloped in 1980. For instance, the approximate location of Carmanah Avenue would be identifiable only by the large concrete water tower that still hides behind the trees today. By 1983, Barrett Dr. began to grow in size and no longer ended at Sandover Crescent. Over the next several years, all the present-day side streets that connect to Barrett Dr. were complete. By 1986, Barrett Drive was developed roughly to the point of Spieden Place.

1986 Overhead view of Barrett Drive under construction and Dean Park Road intersection, facing north.



Home construction proceeded rapidly in the 1980's, and during the next decade. The remainder of Barrett Drive, Sentinel Place, Kingcome Crescent, Echo Park East and West, and

other streets would be finalized. This giant development project implemented over 20 years consisted of 31 plans of subdivision resulting in 784 building lots (2 of which contain the water towers).

The DPE developers paid particular attention to road dimensions and layouts to maximize traffic flow efficiency as well as to enhance the beauty and feeling of spaciousness in the area. Many homes retained portions of the forest in their backyard. This is still apparent today.

Homes built at this time were required to have certain characteristics, including minimum sizes and even specific construction materials. One notable change from today was the requirement for all roofs in the subdivision to be constructed from cedar shakes. This had quite an effect on the appearance of the subdivision. Other materials such as asphalt, slate or aluminum were not permitted until many years later when the risk of a hillside wild fire became a serious concern.

Aerial View, 1995: Dean Park Estates is complete.



By the early 1990s, the development of Dean Park Estates was almost complete and only a few empty building lots remained. In 1992, the developer, Park Pacific Apartments Ltd. gave stewardship of the subdivision to the newly formed Dean Park Estates Community Association to administer the Building Scheme (Schedule of Restrictions) that is attached to each property title. For 20 years the volunteers of the Association, supported by municipal staff and council members, endeavored to maintain the standards established for the subdivision. When new houses were built on vacant lots, or when changes were made to the exteriors of existing houses, the Association volunteers checked the plans for conformance with the Schedule of Restrictions, and solicited feedback from neighbouring property owners before the plans went to the municipality for building permit approval. Today, almost 30 years later, the association volunteers still oversee many issues concerning the subdivision and the welfare of its residents.

Dean Park Estates is one of the best kept secrets on the Saanich Peninsula. The quiet, natural setting of the area and the pride that residents take in maintaining their property and their neighborhoods has few rivals on the island. It is our hope that this history provides some historical enrichment to anyone who calls Dean Park Estates home. We wish to thank new resident Ryan Weston for his extensive research and for drafting this article. We also wish to thank Richard and Joyce Nordlund and Bob and Ev Pendray for their additions and their perspectives as long-term residents of Dean Park Estates.