

Bedford Landing,
adjacent to
Fort Langley.



SHAPING B.C.'s URBAN COMMUNITIES

HUNTER LAIRD
ENGINEERING
IS AT THE FOREFRONT
OF DEVELOPING
SUSTAINABLE
NEIGHBOURHOODS

HUNTER LAIRD ENGINEERING LTD. (HL) IS A LOW-profile consulting company involved in shaping newer urban communities in B.C. This modest 25-person New Westminster engineering firm can trace its operations back over 40 years, however, unless you are active in the development industry, you may not have heard of them.

But as the company's roster of projects continues to expand, it is increasingly seeking qualified recruits for its team, explains Clarence Arychuk, planner and partner. "What we need most are good, enthusiastic, smart young professionals who want to work with us on interesting projects. We're well known in the development industry and most of our clients have come to us through our reputation.

"Many of our clients have been with us for years, so our decision to raise our profile is to target people who don't know us and who may want to work in an interesting and challenging environment.

"We are fortunate to be at the forefront of developing innovative sustainable neighbourhoods and we'd like to have progressive people who share a similar interest join us."

— Clarence Arychuk

We are fortunate to be at the forefront of developing innovative sustainable neighbourhoods and we'd like to have progressive people who share a similar interest join us."

The firm's origins go back to Hunter Crockford & Scobie, a survey and engineering group that started in the 1960s. The firm was joined in the late '60s by David Laird, and in 1974, the engineering arm formed Hunter Laird Engineering Ltd. to take on >



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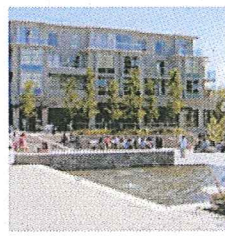
the planning and engineering work. The original founder, Andy Hunter, passed away in 1974, and in 1982 the name was acquired and the company continues to operate as Hunter Laird.

"Though we've been around for a long time, we've successfully adapted to the changing vision of what a 'neighbourhood' is," explains company president Declan Rooney. "The cities in the region and the land development industry are changing. The idea of the conventional family home on a large suburban lot is changing. Small-lot housing in a more traditional street grid pattern is still fairly new in this marketplace, yet we were working on ParkLane's Clover Valley Station community 16 years ago," he says.

While Hunter Laird's core business is surveying, planning and civil engineering, it is developing expertise in high-density, people-friendly sustainable neighbourhoods. Arychuk discusses the philosophy behind these new neighbourhoods.

"We are trying to get people used to thinking differently about where and how they live: that sidewalks should be walked along, where practical parks should be located at the front of houses with garages at the back, not the other way around. There should always be an 'an eye on the street.' We're designing with more public, open spaces to protect the natural environment."

Hunter Laird has pioneered the shift towards new higher-density ground-oriented village-style single-family housing that ranges from row houses and manor houses to village-scale single-family homes on small (approximately 26-by-90-foot) lots. It has also developed new



From top: Town and Gown Square, UniverCity; Clover Valley Station; University Crescent.

servicing standards for these new neighbourhoods — an evolving process encompassing site planning, engineering and construction needs.

Hunter Laird's current work at UniverCity, the new community at Simon Fraser University (SFU), is a great example of how these ideas are being used to develop high-density multi-family housing in a community that offers a village feeling and boasts a smaller environmental footprint. In 1995, SFU and the City of Burnaby entered into an agreement whereby the university transferred 332 hectares of land to the City to be preserved as a conservation area. In return, the university was granted approvals to build a community around the campus. SFU Community Trust is overseeing the development of the UniverCity community that will be home to 10,000 people.

HL is contracted directly by the Trust as community engineers responsible for overseeing the design and installation of new infrastructure. HL's involvement in this project started when it was invited to join Hotson, Bakker, Boniface & Haden Architects (HBBH) of Vancouver as its consulting engineers. During an intense workshop early in 2000, four design teams competed in a design charrette, and through that process the HBBH team was selected and retained as the master planners.

The design challenges are to build a sustainable community on Burnaby Mountain by clustering the development in ways that allow for a pedestrian- and transit-friendly network of roads and walkways, and to design a storm water-management system that will not impact the nearby fisheries sensitive Stoney Creek. Chris Hartman, vice-president of development for the Trust elaborates: "We are creating a leading-edge sustainable community that is pedestrian and transit oriented, where residents can live, work, play, and learn in a compact neighbourhood."

The storm water management system is designed to ease post-development pressure on Stoney Creek. Storm water is collected through an integrated system of infiltration galleries, storm drains, and a unique system of pervious paving parking lanes, boulevard swales, and surface storm-detention ponds. Roadside surface runoff is intercepted from

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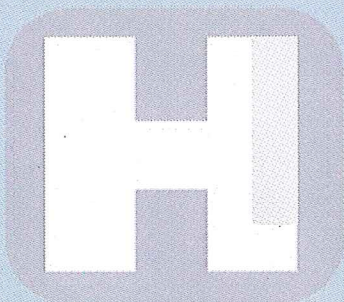
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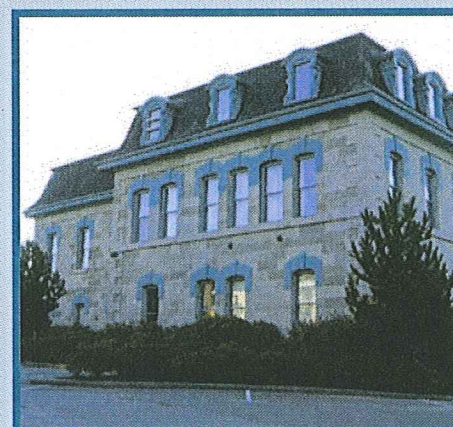
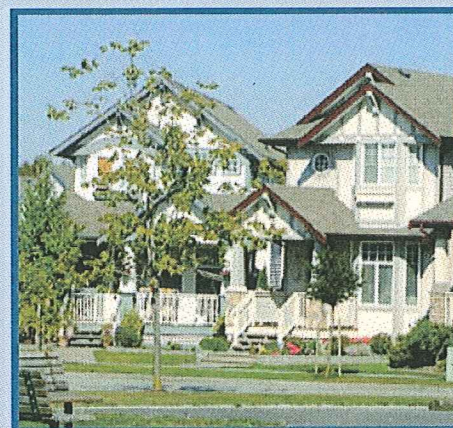
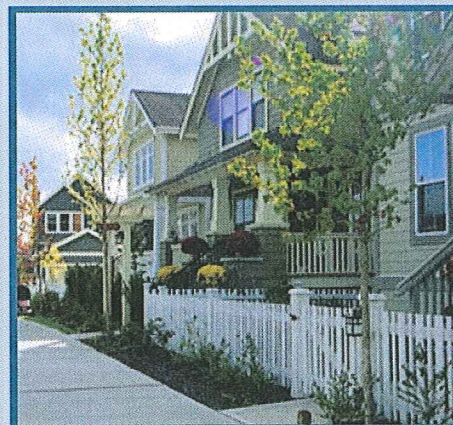
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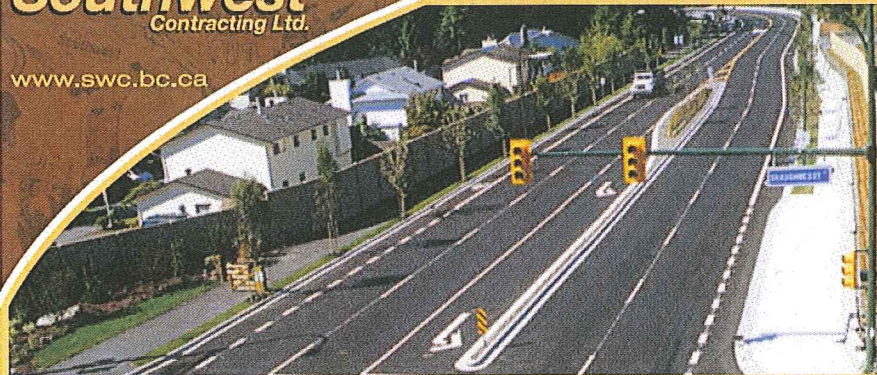
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the streets by the pervious parking lanes and directed to what could best be described as a linear, underground cascading detention storage and infiltration system. These hidden galleries are filled with rocks that filter and allow for a slow release of storm water, thereby simulating a naturally occurring drainage system.

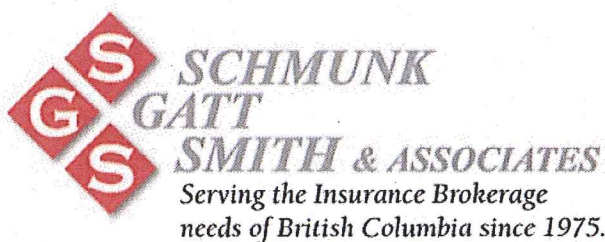
Many of the consultants on the original design team are still involved in the project; CH2M Hill Engineering of Vancouver developed the overall master plan for storm water management that HL is responsible for implementing through detailed design and construction.

The UniverCity community has earned industry recognition, including the City of Burnaby Environment Award for Planning & Development in 2007 and in 2005, BC Hydro Power Smart Excellence Award (for The Cornerstone Building), the 2005 Urban Development Institute Award of Excellence for the Most Sustainable Development, the 2005 Best Community in Canada award from the Canadian Home Builders' Association, and the national Merit Award from the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects for the Town and Gown Square.

A large part the UniverCity vision has been promoted by HL, says Hartman, outlining its contribution. "Even though they are a small shop, they are a full-service firm that can respond with a full complement of services (design, inspection and layout) as issues arise. Declan is innovative, and always comes to the table with new ideas. He's passionate about his work, likes the projects that he's working on, and is committed to them.

"We're also very happy with HL because they are familiar with Burnaby Mountain, the City of Burnaby and SFU. I think HL's clients are very loyal to them and they are loyal to their clients. We thoroughly enjoy working with them, and look forward to continuing to do so."

"I like HL's approach to finding technical solutions to approval-related problems," says Ben Taddei, vice-president of development and construction for ParkLane Homes. "For example, an issue may arise during the approval stage of a project that is based more on perception rather than technical merits; HL will find a technical solution that deals with



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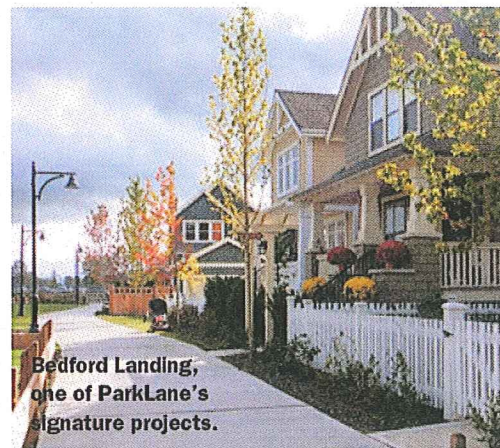
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Bedford Landing,
one of ParkLane's
signature projects.

this perception and that gives the municipal-
ity and the stakeholder the comfort needed in
order to proceed with the development."

ParkLane has built over 5,500 homes in
90 communities since 1980; it has been
recognized with over 250 awards. "HL is
working with us on most of our projects," says
Taddei. The Bedford Landing development
adjacent to Fort Langley is one of ParkLane's
signature projects. Once complete it will have
over 400 units of mixed housing in the same
workable, walkable, liveable, neighbourhood
that will reduce traffic and give the commu-
nity a village atmosphere.

Creative land-use planning in lot layout
and how land is reused – most of ParkLane's
development is on brownfield sites – is key to
sustainable neighbourhoods. Technical chal-
lenges on this site included: flood-proofing
along the Bedford Channel of the Fraser
River by raising the overall grade, while still
protecting important natural environmental
features; soil improvement to reduce post-
construction settlement; and construction
of a 2.5-kilometre-long directionally drilled
250-millimetre diameter sanitary force
main crossing over the Salmon River, and
a storm water management system. Its
purpose is to discharge to both the Fraser and
Salmon Rivers with a bio-filtration pond
system to treat the base flow runoff.

"They are technically sound, but they
also bring something that is rare in other en-
gineering firms, they offer solutions that are
based on a business approach," says Taddei.
"They also have good relationships with the
municipalities so it is much easier to promote
new ideas with HL at the table."

So how does HL meet these challenges?

HUNTER LAIRD ENGINEERING INC.



It's done under the technical direction of partner Victor Werchold – who offers over 35 years of leadership in design and construction – and with a strong complement of committed and experienced employees. To retain these employees, HL offers competitive salaries and benefits, employees' education pursuits are supported, and the company regularly hosts family oriented events. It seems to be a good strategy; the average length of

service is 11 years.

It's fitting that after 40 years this unpretentious engineering firm has found its home in a one-of-a-kind heritage building. HL shares office space in the original Gaolhouse of the B.C. Penitentiary that operated from 1878 to 1980. It was the first building that was constructed on the site by the royal engineers. In 1987, the property was sold for development and it was HL that conceived the plans that featured premium homes overlooking the Fraser River.

The historic Gaolhouse was saved and converted into 4,000 square feet of professional office space that is shared with a medical clinic. In 1992, the building was offered for sale and the developer chose to sell to HL. The New Westminster location near the SkyTrain between the downtown core and the outer regions has been strategic for HL in serving both its long-term steadfast clients and its newer ones.

Though Hunter Laird is incredibly busy developing new, livable neighbourhoods, and the standards that go with them, as more and more of these innovative homes are occupied, and the company's high-standard of work is recognized, it's only a matter of time before HL will have to grow to meet the demand for more of these creative living spaces. ■

This promotional feature was prepared for Hunter Laird Engineering Ltd. by BCBusiness magazine's Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Tonia Jurbin. For information contact BCBusiness director of corporate features John Cochrane at 604-299-7311. Email: jcochrane@canadawide.com

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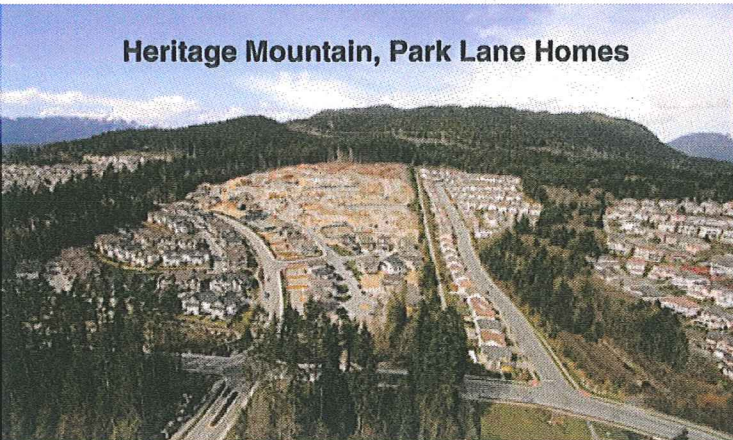
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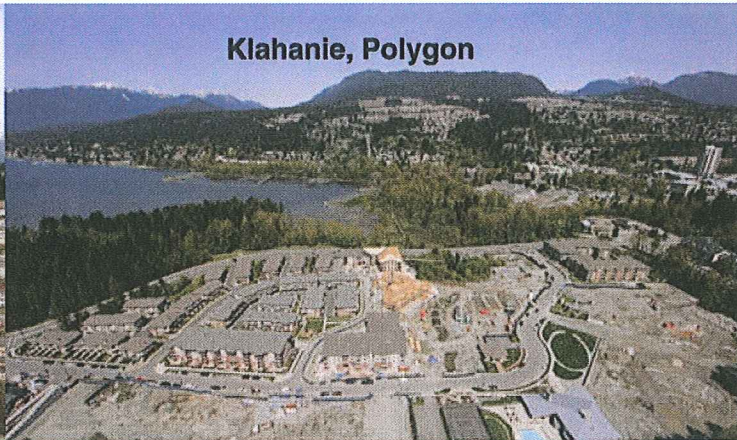
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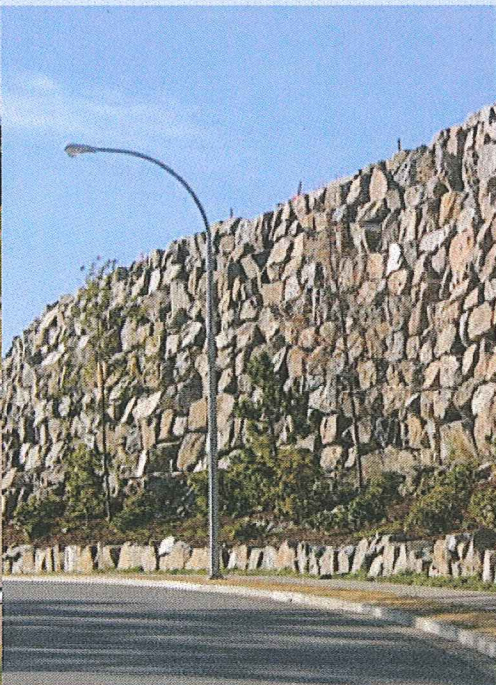
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