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Considerable Development

Transforming the wilderness



Woodland Creek

Family owned and operated for two generations, Totangi Properties is a land management and property development company established in 1968.

Based in Victoria, British Columbia, Totangi Properties' interests include residential and recreational property development, and resource land management.

Totangi Properties takes a long-term view of its holdings and developments. "We look at the various attributes of the land and we try to leverage them to their best use, be it forestry or providing communities for families to live in," says Blair Robertson, who runs the company with his brother Warren and father Ken.

Because Totangi Properties generally holds properties for decades, opportunities present themselves that were not always obvious when the property was acquired. Due to the company's background in forestry and land management, community development is something that can be approached when it makes sense, not as the primary driver of profit.



Jordan River

Totangi Properties
Blair Robertson | Owner

Location: Victoria, British Columbia

"Certain areas that would have been thought of as unsuitable for housing or communities come into play over time," says Robertson. "It's a long-term conservative development philosophy."

Such was the case with Woodland Creek in Sooke, British Columbia.

WOODLAND CREEK

Sooke is a growing community just outside Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island about 60 miles from Vancouver. Sooke is known for its exceptional recreational opportunities and has a history of fishing and forestry. Well-known spots in Sooke include Potholes Regional Park and Potholes Provincial Park. Sooke's popularity has soared because it operates as a base for visiting Vancouver Island's southwest coast—which features the West Coast Trail and Juan de Fuca Provincial Park.

Recreational fishing, boating and mountain biking have been popular for many years in the Sooke area.

"Sooke has developed into a satellite community of Victoria, with an emphasis on people who enjoy the West Coast lifestyle," says Robertson. "It's close to beaches and fishing, and recreational and hiking areas."

In the late 1990s, the community revisited their plan for growth and Totangi Properties' property became a part of that effort.

Sooke was also undergoing an effort to bring sewage infrastructure to the community. Before the public-private partnership to bring a modern sewer system to the community, residents had septic systems—and it was preventing greater population density from happening.

Woodland Creek is a new West Coast neighborhood that offers custom home design, single-family homes and townhomes located near schools, parks and shopping. It's a walkable community with integrated sidewalks and a trail network that delivers residents to schools and shops. There is a 4.5-acre landscaped park with a pond, tot lot and trail system in the plan.

"Because these projects take time, you have to deal with many different people and city staff," says Robertson. "This has been a learning process for Sooke as it's grown, and it has come to look at the development industry as a partner through which it can achieve sustainable outcomes." The citizenry itself was amenable to this project.

"You have to put the right product in the right place for the market to accept it," says Robertson. "We've been surprised because given where we're situated—adjacent to schools—we thought that it would primarily attract young families, but it's been evenly divided among young families, older families and retirees."

The distance from Victoria makes Sooke an affordable place for most families. It creates a commuter lifestyle but provides a relaxed West Coast atmosphere that brings people in.

Totangi Properties has other projects in the pipeline as well.

Wildwood Terrace is a recreational development with 35 lots completed. It's 30 minutes west of Sooke on Vancouver Island's west coast at Jordan River. It borders a provincial park that offers beaches, surfing, and fishing. Lots are larger—about 2.5 acres—and are geared at those looking to spend their summers in Jordan River. "We've been surprised by the number of pioneers interested in living full-time in the area. They are folks that are independent-minded and have the ability to work from home," says Robertson. Jordan River is an area in transition from industrial forestry to eco-tourism. "It's been a neat project. We were the first owners out there to develop recreational lots. We had the advantage of doing it first and, we think, doing it properly. We continue to have a long-term interest in the area."

It's been a successful project for Totangi Properties. It was formerly forestry land logged twice before but Totangi Properties realized that its location, adjacent to a new park, made it an unlikely place for logging again. "We thought we'd rather just let the new trees grow and develop recreational lots so people could enjoy the area," says Robertson.

When the project began a decade ago, green building was not commonplace. However, the preservation of green space in conjunction


with other environmental commitments already puts this development in the sustainable category.

Totangi Properties' upcoming development in Langford, British Columbia, is another case where long-term property ownership—40 years, in this case—has enabled innovative and creative outcomes.

"Working in conjunction with neighboring long-term property owners, we approached the City of Langford to come up with a comprehensive neighborhood plan for the site," says Robertson. "The long-term knowledge of the land combined with extensive environmental assessment meant we could develop a project to work with the land rather than making the land fit the project."

South Skirt Mountain is expected to take as many as 20 years to build out at a projected value of \$1.6 billion. It is zoned for approximately 2,900 units with a neighborhood commercial component; Totangi's interest accounts for 300 units.

"There are key sustainability commitments related to the entire project. Our common vision for the project is to create a vibrant community that will contribute to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the region. We will be dedicating 40 percent of the land to the city as open space. It will be all green building, with significant community enhancements," says Robertson. "Where we're at with that project is that it's zoned and we are now working with our partners on the details. It's quite a large project and has had some challenges, but we are in for the long term."

Totangi Properties will continue to do what it does best—and at its own conservative pace. 

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Levelton Consultants Ltd. is proud to have provided the following services during the development of the Wildwood Terrace subdivision in Jordan River and the Woodland Creek subdivision in Sooke, BC.

- **Geotechnical** services including subgrade review of house lots as well as the road and utility alignments, monitoring placement and compaction of engineered fill and review of slope stability.
- **Materials** testing services included concrete testing of curbs/sidewalks, asphalt testing of road pavements and compaction testing of utility trench back fill and road base preparation.

Levelton looks forward to continuing our long-standing relationship with Totangi Properties as the South Skirt Mountain development is set to commence in the near future.



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