



GREEN TARA incorporated

Edmonds, WA ☀ 1992

His Eminence Ngawang Migyur Rinpoche founded Green Tara incorporated in 1992 to develop sensitive sites more beneficially, create meritorious employment opportunities for local Dharma students and practitioners and help finance the reconstruction of Tibetan Monasteries destroyed during China's Communist and Cultural Revolutions.



GREENWAY

Snohomish County's First Low Impact Multi-Family Residential Development (LID) - Edmonds, WA ☀ 1993

With Rinpoche's encouragement and financial investment, I found and negotiated GTI's purchase of the land and asked Rich Haag - revered teacher, friend and co-conspirator, Founder and Professor Emeritus of the University of Washington's Department of Landscape Architecture, Beijing Olympics site design finalist and the world's only landscape architect to win the American Society of Landscape Architects' coveted gold medal twice - Seattle's Gasworks Park and Bainbridge Island's Bloedel Reserve - <http://richhaagassoc.com/studio/> - to help us design GREENWAY, GTI's first site design and development project. Together we envisioned a new community of 28 affordable townhouses sharing a forested wetlands preserve and traffic buffer that became Snohomish County's first "Low Impact Development" or LID. From the outset it was clear that the County's new street and storm water management standards needed to be changed. The new standards imposed rigidly uniform and unnecessarily wide (65 feet) residential street right of ways with concrete curbs, gutters, 5 foot planting strips, sidewalks and costly underground concrete pipes and manholes on both sides of a crowned road section to drain storm water to and through an oil/water separator that would be rarely if ever maintained. Our alternative eliminated the planting strips and unnecessary sidewalks to save more of the site's many mature native trees and proposed a much narrower and less intrusive (33 feet) street right of way that drains laterally to convey storm water to a shallow bio-filtration swale that drains to a wildlife sanctuary with a new duck pond that provides secondary bio-filtration and further settling of sediments before the significantly cleaner storm water spills naturally into the forested wetlands.

Although our plan significantly reduced site development costs and promised a more intelligently designed community and much larger profits when compared to the many conventionally designed sites developed at the time, the subsequent financial investment needed to design and build the buildings and create design and construction jobs for local Dharma students and practitioners, which Rinpoche expected one of three Taiwanese Buddhist benefactors to provide, didn't materialize. Eventually I found a group of developers from California who were eager to buy the project for a price that permitted me to repay Rinpoche's investment, cover our consultants' and my modest fees and expenses, and contribute our nearly \$70,000 profit to Rinpoche's efforts to rebuild his monasteries in Tibet. Except for their wildlife biologist, who had little authority, the County's Planning and Public Works officials (mostly traffic engineers), stubbornly opposed our innovative and more holistic site, street, buildings, wetlands and storm water management design for more than six months. Eventually, our plan's many benefits became too difficult to deny and our regulators grudgingly approved the project's controversial site development permit with the warning, "Don't ever think you'll be able to do this again!" During record rains a few years after it was built and occupied, GREENWAY's site plan allowed it to avoid the widespread flooding that adversely impacted surrounding multifamily residential developments. Sometime afterwards, at least one county official traveled to the site on at least one occasion to promote the project's innovative site planning principles as a proven way to minimize the negative impacts of a site's development while significantly lowering its costs.