

# R St. Johns REVIEW

Susan Waddell photo

North Portland's Community Newspaper - Bi-Weekly - PO Box 83068, Port. OR 97283 503-283-5086 reviewnewspaper@gmail.com WEB: www.stjohnsreview.com

## Two large native oak threatened by controversial residential developer

Everett Custom Homes of Beaverton, a prominent infill developer, has purchased a property in St. Johns at N. Mohawk and N. Decatur and marked one or both large Oregon oak on edge of the single-family home site to be cut down.

The trees, located at 6738 N. Mohawk, appear healthy and around 60' tall with a trunk width of 3-4 ft., indicating an age of 100-200 years. Oak mature at 200 years and can live to 500-600 yrs. The iconic Pacific northwest trees have declined to 15% of their original numbers in the Willamette Valley and the city has stated a goal of protecting remaining trees. These particular trees are a majestic remnant of the local Willamette Bluff oak-madrone woodland.

Everett Custom Homes owner, Vic Remmers, may have adjusted the lot line to make the site slightly undersized enabling removal of trees under the new tree code. Remmers is not new to tree controversy. He has been at the center of a storm over the cutting down of three 150 yr. old giant sequoia trees in the Eastmoreland neighborhood (They Might Kill Giants, by Aurther Bradford, Willamette Week, Aug. 26, 2015). SE activist Elizabeth Bennett said protesting neighbors were "preventing huge old trees very much on the edge of a property from being removed for development. It seems like we could have construction and new homes and still leave the trees." While the Eastmoreland neighborhood association was negotiating with Everett to build around the trees, the company decided to cut



Mature native oak at N. Mohawk and Decatur seen from below.

the trees anyway (KATU, by Emily Sinovic, 9-14-15). A standoff between a tree-cutting crew and neighbors followed.

In another incident, Everett Custom Homes cut down a century old Douglas fir tree at SE Clinton and 41st after demolishing an older house in order to replace it with three luxury homes. When Everett reportedly indicated it would knock down two more large Douglas firs in the lot's corner, protesters, including several neighbors, gathered at the site. One neighbor scaled the remaining tree in protest.

In the Concordia neighborhood a blog reported in 2014 that, "In

the last several weeks, Vic Remmers and Everett Custom homes has aggressively descended upon

## Photo of the Week

*This photo was selected because it shows that in this busy, busy world we can still find beauty to behold as we travel through traffic and life. Never forget to look! It was taken by Hesther Thurman.*

*This week's Masthead was taken by Susan Waddell and shows what is to come as trees began changing colors.*

*Send your photos to the Review. There are only two issues left to enter into the contest to possibly win \$100.*

*See more about it on Page 2 of this issue.*



## Between Our Rivers

By  
Barbara  
Quinn



Concordia to stamp their cookie cutter homes in our beautiful community taking down several old growths for no real reason" (Save the Concordia Tree, by bloggers Jack D'Mestiere and Rena Jones, 8-18-15).

Everett doesn't always wait to get permits to start work. In January of 2014, the company started unpermitted excavation at the historic Herman Vetter property at 5830 SE Taylor, endangering both the national historic register house and the roots of one of the city's oldest sequoia's on a nearby property. The digging occurred on the Martin Luther King holiday weekend when neighbors were not able to contact the city. Though the city did later issue a stop work order, the maximum fine to the company was said to be only \$1000.

Everett cut trees located on lot edges that could likely have been preserved with thought and creativity. The small trees planted as replacements, can't compare in value to the mature trees being re-

moved. Everett's website claims that, "we work painstakingly to preserve any trees we can when building a new home. However, sometimes trees do need to be removed, due to displacement of the original house or having grown beyond their expected space or presenting a hazard."

Though it was originally intended to protect large, older trees, Portland's new tree code may actually be enabling Remmers and other cookie cutter developers to cut them. The code has made it cheaper and easier to remove trees for infill housing on undersize lots.

In response to St. Johns neighbors' complaints about the oak trees being marked for removal, the office of Urban Forestry inspected the two trees and attached a warning to one in the public right-of-way forbidding the cutting of a public tree and announcing a sizable fine if they do so. The fate of the second oak tree is less

**Continued on Page 4  
"Threatened Oaks"**

### SEND YOUR BRIDGE PICTURES

Send your unique  
(and personally taken)  
photos of the  
**St. Johns Bridge**  
to the Review.

**You could win \$100.**

See page two for full details