

A new dawn on Cap Sante: Anacortes Rotary unveils centennial viewpoint

ERNIE HAYDEN

For the Anacortes American

On a clear morning at sunrise atop Cap Sante, Anacortes wakes to a breathtaking panorama — Mount Baker glowing on the eastern horizon, Guemes Channel shimmering below and the city itself nestled in the morning light.

Thanks to nearly a decade of vision and determination from the Rotary Club of Anacortes, this iconic viewpoint is now more accessible and welcoming than ever before, marking a centennial milestone with a legacy that will serve the community for generations.

A CENTENNIAL VISION TAKES SHAPE

In 2017, as the Anacortes Rotary Club approached its 100th anniversary, members sought a project that would leave a lasting mark on the city they had served since 1922.

After a lively debate and a club-wide vote, the idea took shape: create a safe, inviting trail up the west side of Cap Sante, the city's dramatic stone promontory.

At that time, there was no distinct or safe pathway up the west side of Cap Sante. The steep climb and erosion made access difficult.

Club member Tim Garrison inspired the trail's design, Ron Litzinger oversaw many pathway features and Duane Clark presided over the Centennial celebrations. After years of planning and hard work, the Rotary Viewpoint Trail was completed and dedicated to the City of Anacortes in 2022.

A NEW IDEA: THE EAST OVERLOOK

As Rotarians and city officials celebrated the trail's completion, a new inspiration emerged.

Jonn Lunsford, Anacortes Parks and Recreation director, suggested



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Anacortes Rotary Centennial Project Steering Committee.

building a viewpoint on the underutilized east side of Cap Sante's summit. He felt this would reveal sweeping views of Mt. Baker, Guemes Channel and the refinery causeways — vistas rarely enjoyed by the public from the top of Cap Sante.

Club members embraced the idea, but the design needed to fit the rugged landscape while offering a meaningful experience. After reviewing several concepts, they settled on a design that balanced scale and environmental sensitivity.

Key advisors from outside the Anacortes Rotary Club included Dan Conrardy of the Fidalgo Rotary Club, who provided design input; former City Councilor and architect Cynthia Richardson, who added accessibility features; and Nels Strandberg of Strandberg Construction, who offered expertise in building atop Cap Sante's formidable stone.

COMMUNITY EFFORT AND SUPPORT

Ambition brought new challenges. The project's scope expanded, and so did the budget — from

the original \$100,000 for the trail to approximately \$500,000 for both trail and overlook.

The Anacortes Rotary Club turned to the community, launching a fundraising campaign that drew support from all corners. Major gifts included \$25,000 from Marathon Petroleum, \$25,000 from the Anacortes Kiwanis Club/Parks Foundation, and two anonymous \$100,000 matching grants, which together helped raise \$400,000.

Additional funds came from club members, Rotary District 5050, and public donations. More than 1,000 hours of volunteer labor powered the project to completion.

DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION

The city managed a competitive bidding process, ultimately awarding the construction contract to Strandberg Construction of Anacortes.

Pacific Landscape Architecture of Bellingham, a woman-owned firm, led the design, aiming to ensure the overlook blended with its natural surroundings through a sweeping arc, stonework

and built-in seating. The architects also contribute to local environmental initiatives by supporting watershed tree planting with every contract received.

On April 16, 2025, the Rotary Viewpoint was officially dedicated in a ceremony led by Jonn Lunsford.

Speakers included Rotary President Marta McClintok, Mayor Matt Miller, Nels Strandberg, Samish Tribal Chairman Tom Wooten, and Town Crier Julie (Johnson) Nester.

The event celebrated the new public space and the spirit of collaboration and service that made it possible.

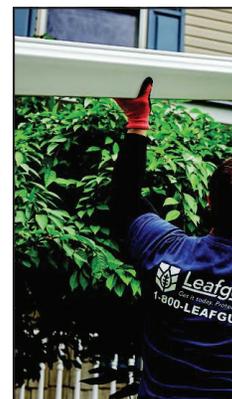
A LASTING LEGACY

Today, the Rotary Viewpoint at Cap Sante is a gathering place for residents, hikers and visitors.

Plans are underway to add a commemorative plaque and interpretive signs to the viewpoint, aiming to further enrich the visitor experience.

The Anacortes Rotary Club, now more than 70 members strong, continues to seek new ways to serve, guided by the motto "Service Above Self."

Everyone is welcome to attend their weekly meetings on Wednesdays at noon at The Majestic Hotel and learn how to get involved. For more information, visit the Anacortes Rotary website at anacortesrotary.org.



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