



A Brief Introduction to *rare* — the elevator speech

The **rare Charitable Research Reserve** is a community-driven urban land trust, a nature reserve, headquartered at the confluence of the Grand and Speed Rivers in the heart of Waterloo Region.

Because they have been in so few hands since colonial times, the lands still have 6 of 8 pre-settlement landscapes and contain more than 24 habitat types, including remnant old growth Carolinian forest with trees over 240 years old; alvars — a limestone base with only a small covering of soil creating a unique and globally rare habitat; and, cold water streams and wetlands, to name only a few. It has an exceptional array of flora and fauna, with species that are ranked “significant” or “at risk” regionally, provincially, nationally, and even globally.

Our village hub property in Blair is known for its historical significance as the first stage coach Inn in Upper Canada. The 1840s limestone slit barn is one of only a few remaining in Ontario. Archaeological artefacts more than 10,500 years old have been discovered.

The vision of **rare** is to preserve its sites and ecosystems intact and in perpetuity, for the community to enjoy in a natural state. At the same time, the lands act as a living laboratory for research that, in turn, informs restoration practices and education programs through a *Chain of Learning* that reaches even the youngest child in a program called *Every Child Outdoors* (ECO), a model of hands-on learning, in the out-of-doors.

Through these programs — conservation, research and education — **rare** develops best practices for use around the world, becomes a model for others and engages an entire community in training the next generation of conservationists who will perpetuate these values. It also develops a new economy, bringing scientists and senior practitioners to the area, while exporting knowledge and raising awareness of the site.

Part of the ECO program takes place at **rare's** Springbank Farms, which is the largest urban agriculture project in the Region with 110 community garden plots, and extensive education, demonstration and Food Bank gardens. Every year, volunteers, many of them seniors, harvest up to 2500 pounds of produce for the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank.

North House, Canada's award-winning entry to the 2009 International Solar Decathlon, and a \$4 million research investment by the University of Waterloo, found a permanent home along Blair Road, at the foot of Springbank Farms. It provides the opportunity to research cutting-edge engineering technology and is a tangible way to let the community experience sustainable design and technology. Along with research conducted by outside organisations, a writer-in-residence brings cross-disciplinary interactions, and is just one of many examples demonstrating how art, culture and nature are intertwined at **rare**.

The first three properties purchased in trust by **rare** have already become a showcase for our community's leadership and expertise in all fields relating to the environment. They demonstrate richness in art and culture while promoting healthy water, soil, air and the diversity of plants and animals that are paramount for human well-being and ongoing economic stability.