

'Groundbreaking Sparks Westpark Redevelopment'
By Sean Janssen

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Dignitaries put shovels to dirt Friday, Dec. 16 at the corner of Oyster Bay Avenue and Russell Road, breaking ground on the Firs II assisted living facility and symbolically taking a significant step toward the redevelopment of Westpark.

"This is a tremendous day for the housing authority," said Lynn Horton, chair of the Bremerton Housing Authority (BHA) board of commissioners. "It is many years in coming. This is the first building construction in what we hope will be a series... in the redevelopment of Westpark."

The 72-unit facility is just one piece of the puzzle in a plan to reinvent Westpark as a mixed-use, mixed-income section of the city. Illustrations of the potential future Westpark, courtesy of Rice Fergus Miller and Mithun Architects, were on display at the event.

The \$12 million project will be owned and operated by BHA. The project is being developed by Marathon Senior Living Services of Bellevue, with architecture work done by Rice Fergus Miller and the contractor is Construction Enterprises and Contractors of Tacoma with Tim Gruber serving as project superintendent and Mike Medrzycki as business development manager.

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"This has been a complicated project but ... we have come out on top," said Ted Johnson of Marathon.

"Assisted living facilities are exceedingly expensive for clientele," said Horton. "This gives us an opportunity to give something important to our community. "

Firs II is scheduled to open its doors in January 2007, with a virtually unheard of 90 percent of its units dedicated for people on Medicaid. Sixty of the 72 units will be for assisted living while the remaining dozen are dedicated for patients with dementia.

"This (facility) far and away provides the most Medicaid space among 13 other facilities of its kind in the state," said Bill Moss of the state Department of Social and Health Services. The groundbreaking has BHA officials excited to go forward.

"This is very important. Now, the community is going to know this is finally coming together," said Commissioner Sharon Cromley. "It's solid and it's on the way. This is so good for Bremerton, having this facility available."