

## 'Westpark: Reinventing a Neighborhood in Bremerton'

By Benjamin Minnick

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The Bremerton Housing Authority's vision for redeveloping the aging Westpark neighborhood has moved into high gear with the selection of Marathon Development to head up the project.

"This is the largest redevelopment in Bremerton's recent history, probably 40 years, if not longer," said Ted Johnson, Marathon president and owner. "It will be the western gateway into the city of Bremerton." Plans include over 800 housing units and 250,000 square feet of retail.

Johnson said his firm is not investing in the \$300 million project, but will act as quarterback for the team. He said a February 16 consultants meeting will mark the start of master planning for the 82-acre site, which was built during World War II to provide housing.

"We're very excited because Westpark will be a real gem of a neighborhood," said Chris Holden, a housing authority commissioner. He said the new urbanism approach will provide a pedestrian-friendly layout.

The project is being developed in three phases, and the first is under way. Phase one involves constructing an assisted-living facility called Firs II and moving Russell Road about 300 feet. Johnson said the reconfigured road will have a landscaped median and streetlights, creating a new boulevard and entry into Westpark. "It will be a striking sign of the development," he said.

The \$13 million first phase is being funded by HUD grants and tax-exempt bonds. Contractors of Tacoma is the general contractor and Rice Fergus Miller Architecture & Fergus Miller Architecture & Planning of Bremerton is the architect. Firs II will be owned by the housing authority.

Johnson said he hopes to start construction in 15 months on the second phase, which includes infrastructure, retail and 250 low-income rental units. There are about 26 acres for retail, which could be anchored by a grocery or department store. The rental units will be scattered throughout the development in garden-style clusters of four- and eight-complexes.

Phase three will have 200 for-sale single-family homes, and 300 townhouses and stacked flats. The housing authority will develop the sites and Quadrant has been selected as the "builder of choice" for the single-family homes. Johnson said the goal is to have a mix of incomes.

The housing authority will spend about \$40 million on infrastructure and home site development.

Johnson said the town center could include some office space. There is a newer community center and older athletic field that will be part of the redeveloped neighborhood. The field may get a face-lift.

The big challenge, according to Johnson, will be relocating 1,100 residents that live in the 550 rental units owned by the housing authority. Half of them will likely be relocated during phase two. He said the housing authority has bought some property for relocation housing and will issue vouchers for those interested in renting from private landlords.

Holden said the housing authority recently bought the Erlands Point Apartments in Bremerton to rehab for some of the displaced residents. "Every unit lost to the Westpark site will be replaced by a unit," he said.

About a third of the new housing in Westpark will be geared towards low-income renters. Returning tenants will be offered new homes at the same rates they were paying - 30 percent of their income.

"As low-income families have the opportunity to integrate into more economically diverse neighborhoods, they tend to do better," Holden said. "We want to improve the quality of life for our tenants."

Westpark will be different from NewHolly in Seattle or Salishan in Tacoma because of its large retail component," Johnson said. He said it will provide momentum for other redevelopment projects in Bremerton.

Westpark will be one of the few redevelopment projects in the country that is not using HUD Hope VI financing because its housing units have been well maintained. "It will be something that people from around the country will want to look at," Holden said. Both NewHolly and Salishan are Hope VI projects because they are replacing dilapidated housing.

Westpark will also be renamed. "We have to start building this new excitement," Johnson said, "and it certainly has to start with the name." Completion is expected to take five or six years.

Marathon Development specializes in retirement communities. Some of its projects include Spitwood at Pine Lake in Issaquah, the Ferry County Retirement and Assisted Living project, and the upcoming Kings Manor Phase 2 in Tacoma.