

## 'Senior Housing a Sign of What's Next for Westpark'

By Steven Gardner



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The near completion of a 72-unit residential complex marks a milestone in a much bigger facelift for Bremerton's Westpark neighborhood.

The Bremerton Housing Authority's five-phase redevelopment effort began with construction of the 72-unit Bay Vista Commons, work that is just about done.

Construction crews have yet to install carpet and other final touches to the building, which will contain 60 assisted-living units and 12 units for Alzheimer's patients.

The biggest sign of progress, however, is that a rerouted Russell Road opened Thursday afternoon, returning to Westpark a throughway that was closed after ground broke in December 2005.

The Bay Vista building itself should have a certificate of occupancy by the end of the month, said Jim Cave, project manager for Marathon Development. Once that's done, the housing authority can begin assigning apartments.

"We don't believe there is going to be any problem filling this quickly," said Kurt Wiest, BHA's executive director.

One reason is because the complex will be public housing offering assisted living, something housing authority officials believe is rare. Many assisted-living facilities charge rents two or three times higher than the typical Social Security payment, Wiest said.

Most of Bay Vista's residents will be like other public housing residents, paying 30 percent of their incomes to live there. Medicaid will pay the costs for the daily assistance.

For their money, residents will have a common dining area, an activity room, a hair salon and a television room with what could be a pricey view of Oyster Bay.

Cave, pointing to one of the many rooms with views of the bay, said, "There's some really nice real estate here.

A few of the units will be market rate. The studios and one-bedroom residences have refrigerators, sinks and microwave ovens, but the main meals are served in the dining area.

A backup generator is in place to make sure the heat and kitchen appliances and some lighting is on during power outages.

Completion of the project will be seen as momentum for the rest of Westpark's redevelopment efforts, Wiest said.

The agency is expecting approval of its demolition and disposition plan from the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development within a couple of weeks, Wiest said. Once that comes through, the agency can apply for relocation vouchers that will help pay for current Westpark residents to move, mostly to other parts of Kitsap County.

Once that's in place, the agency can begin its design phase for the second phase of the project. The housing authority is turning the 82-acre site with 1940-era structures into a 759-home development, most of which will be privately owned.

The redevelopment is part of a national move to decentralize public housing. Some residents may return to the 190 public housing units that will be part of the new development, but most will use housing vouchers to pay what they're paying for rent now somewhere else.

The overall redevelopment project is scheduled to be complete in 2011.