



650-home project at Birch Bay finishing first phase

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Byline: Jared Paben

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Developers have invested about \$30 million buying land, installing infrastructure and building a sales house, but not one of the 650 high-end homes planned for the Horizon at Semiahmoo development has been constructed. That's about to change.

"We've got the first phase essentially completed with about 74 single-family lots ready to go to market," developer Fred Bovenkamp said.

Bovenkamp is one of three partners working to build Horizon at Semiahmoo, a commercial-residential project on 200 acres between Semiahmoo Parkway and Birch Point Road and west of Shintaffer Road. The project, which will be constructed in phases, is expected to add 1,500 to 2,000 new residents to the fast-growing area.

As part of the project, developers paid \$5 million to build a road with a median, bike lanes and sidewalks connecting Birch Point Road to Semiahmoo Parkway, just west of the intersection with Shintaffer Road, Bovenkamp said. The stretch, which will be more than a mile long when completed, will be given to Whatcom County, he said. It's expected to open by the end of 2008.

Developers will also spend about \$500,000 to build a roundabout where the new road intersects with Semiahmoo Parkway.

The project, which has been three years in the making, will focus heavily on sustainability: Everything from site designs to housing designs to construction materials is intended to reduce its impact on the environment, Bovenkamp said.

"We've got elements of reduced development impact already from the day we designed it," he said. "It was really a different philosophy than you typically see in a residential development."

Internationally known Seattlebased Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects designed the project, and it was because of the efforts to build a sustainable project that they came on board, Bovenkamp said.

"They're a very large firm," he said. "They really don't need a project like this."

For example, architects want to design the homes, which will cost up to \$2 million, to stay cool without having to have an air conditioning system, which is unusual for higher-end homes, he said.

The goal is to have all structures meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards, nationally accepted standards for environmentally friendly construction.

The project won't be fully built until 2009, Bovenkamp said. The commercial component will be built in the last phase, including 100,000 square feet of commercial- retail space.

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