

Developer wants to build 225 houses at Fairview site



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(Photo: KOBBI R. BLAIR / Statesman Journal)

Eric Olsen, a local developer, plans to buy a 50-acre portion of the former Fairview Training Center site in southeast Salem and create a 225-lot housing project.

The sale of the land —located south of Leslie Middle School, along Pringle Road SE—hasn't closed. But Olsen and the property's seller, Sustainable Fairview Associates LLC, said a deal was nearly complete.

The Fairview property, which is bordered by Reed, Pringle, and Strong Roads SE, gets its name from a home for developmentally disabled people that operated there for nearly 100 years. The former state property was sold to private owners soon after Fairview closed in 2000.

Community leaders, as early as 2001, called for a high-quality development at the Fairview site that met certain objectives, such as maximizing open space and protecting natural areas. Olsen's housing project appears to meet the goals proposed for the property.

"I think it will fulfill the long-term dream of creating a sustainable, interesting, liveable community," Olsen said.

Olsen's company, Olsen Design and Development Inc., is best known for its Edwards Addition housing project in Monmouth. It's a "new urbanism" development, which places an emphasis pedestrian-friendly streets, houses with porches in front and garages in back, and a variety of home sizes and prices. He intends to replicate that style of development at the Fairview site.

"It's an alternative to the typical subdivision that you get in the city of Salem," Olsen said. His proposed project in Salem, called Fairview Addition, would include an amphitheater and a commons for neighborhood gatherings. Building on the property could begin by this winter, he said.

Sustainable Fairview Associates, the seller of property, doesn't foresee any obstacles that might block the sale.

"The deal has been signed completely and terms of the sale are all set," said Russ Beaton, a retired Willamette University economics professor who is part of Sustainable Fairview Associates.

The sale of the 50-acres is an approximately \$4 million transaction, Beaton said. The seller has also agreed to transfer an additional 15 acres, at no cost, that will be preserved as open space, Beaton said.

The sale will not officially close until Olsen get his preliminary plans approved by the city, Beaton said. Olsen's proposal for the property is consistent with Fairview's master plan, he said.

Fairview's master plan lays out a general set of goals. To meet Salem's requirements, any prospective developer has to submit a "refinement plan" that is more specific and passes muster with the city council.

Olsen would be the second developer to build single-family houses on the Fairview site. In late 2004, the backers of Pringle Creek Community acquired about 32-acres of Fairview property. Pringle Creek Community has since grown into a small cluster of homes, with orchards and greenhouses. The community is known for its sustainable features, such as LEED certified buildings and use of solar power.

Simpson Hills LLC, a group of local developers, also plans build apartments on a 43-acre portion of the Fairview site. The Simpson Hills development is north of the intersection of Battle Creek Road SE and Reed Road SE.

mrose@StatesmanJournal.com (503) 399-6657 or follow on Twitter @mrose_sj

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