

The Morning Star

Development plans unveiled

Morning Star

Friday, August 25, 2006

Byline: Richard Rolke

A major resort development is in the spotlight in Lake Country.

Plans were confirmed Wednesday for the LakeStone resort in the Okanagan Centre area. It will include an 18-hole signature Robert Trent Jones II golf course, a hotel, spa, shops, restaurants, marina, vineyards and homes to be constructed over a 10 to 12-year period.

Rezoning and official community plan amendments are currently being sought from Lake Country council, and a public hearing was held recently.

"Our goal was to work closely with the Lake Country district and the community to create a resort community opportunity that captures the essence of aspirations of the region with its Okanagan lifestyle," said Peter Withers, project manager.

Villas will range from \$700,000 to \$1.8 million and estate and waterfront lots will be priced from \$550,000 to \$1.5 million. It will generate \$1.5 billion in economic activity.

"LakeStone creates a new formula for resort development by drawing upon an international team of experts with evolving design and construction technologies to create an entirely new resort community with exclusive, low density housing and low impact to preserve and complement this amazing waterfront property," said John Murphy, president.

However, some residents worry that LakeStone is just one of a number of developments, and the nature of the area is changing.

"Adding 1,300 houses (at LakeStone) will triple the size of the community," said Jim Taylor, who lives in Okanagan Centre.

"The general mood is most don't want it but they believe it's a done deal."

Besides development in Lake Country, projects are also close at hand in Kelowna and Vernon.

"Some people feel like they're the meat in the sandwich," said Rich Gibbons, an Okanagan Centre resident.

However, the project also has its share of supporters.

"It will impact the area, hopefully quite positively," said Alice Rees, Okanagan Centre's representative on Lake Country council.

"Growth helps pay for the infrastructure improvements everyone wants."

Rees understands the apprehension among some existing residents.

"It was a quiet, rural area and we've been discovered. They bought into the area for lifestyle and they're reluctant to give it up. It will change the lifestyle."

Rees says council is dedicated to considering all views and making a decision that is best for the community. That view is supported by Gibbons.

“We want to ensure that the rights and needs of existing residents are taken into account and we ensure that whatever is created will be the best it can be,” he said.

Length: 410 words



LAKESTONE DEVELOPMENT is awaiting approval from Lake Country council for a major new resort project in Okanagan Centre.