

‘Canterbury tales’

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Staff photo/Ian Gleadle

Developer Eric Campbell of CamWest Development Inc. plans to buy the Canterbury Square property in downtown Woodinville.

Campbell hopes to transplant many of the established trees on the property, using them to embellish the mixed-use community he proposes.

The pending sale

When asked about the status of the sale of the Canterbury Square property, the 20.72-acre manufactured-home park in downtown Woodinville, Eric Campbell, founder of CamWest Development Inc. of Kirkland, said, “We are currently on target as per (our purchase and sale agreement).”

No one is divulging details of the agreement, however. Royce Cottle, of Leibsohn and Company, a real estate brokerage firm in Bellevue handling the transaction, will only say, “We are under contract and still planning to close.”

Kevin Connelly, Canterbury Square Condominium Association president, said, “We are moving forward with CamWest. Until we know more, we can’t say anything.”

So the sale of downtown Woodinville’s prime piece of real estate is pending. If the deal closes and survives challenges (more about that later), and the City of Woodinville eventually vets and permits Campbell’s planned “Westwood” community, there will be big changes in store for Woodinville, changes that mesh with the city’s longtime vision of a pedestrian-friendly downtown.

The developer’s vision

Campbell said he looked to Portland; Vancouver, British Columbia; cities along the West Coast and even Europe to study what it is, exactly, that creates a great pedestrian feeling. But perhaps even more than merely observing what works somewhere else or going so far as to borrow concepts that have worked for other cities, Campbell wants to begin by playing off some of the city’s own assets, its heritage, its recreational opportunities, its tourist district, its nearby preserved farmland, and that million-dollar amenity that likes to show its face every now and again: Mount Rainier.

The Canterbury property itself has a number of its own assets. For starters, it is close to many of the features just mentioned, as well as to shops, banks, and public transportation. In addition, the property has a meandering creek, Woodin Creek, and many beautiful established trees.



Campbell would like to put a walking path along the creek corridor with benches to sit on to enjoy the view. Moreover, he'd like to transplant some of the beautiful trees to areas of the development that would benefit most from them.

"I'd like to use those trees to bring instant greenery onto a cleared and graded site," he said.

He also said he'd consider putting some of the trees into a wide median along what is now 135th Avenue Northeast. The widened avenue would become more of a boulevard and extend to the South Bypass. The mature trees would add a certain grace that saplings would lack. Campbell envisions the median as more of a park than a strip of lawn.

"We're hoping to have a walking path, a tot park enclosed by iron fencing, and a fountain, not unlike the one at Redmond Town Center (with iron fencing surrounding it)," he said.

According to the city, the project would call for certain roads to be built per the city's Grid Road Ordinance. In addition to connecting 135th to the South Bypass, a new section of 173rd in the vicinity of Garden Way would be required. The new community would also have internal streets set out in accordance with the city's grid system, said Campbell.

"I plan to go over and beyond what the city requires," he said.

The overall goal is to "get eyes on the street," Campbell said, to have a safe, walkable community that stimulates people to come into town from the trails or the tourist district or the planned 21 Acres project with Farmers Market and Heritage Garden – and stay a while.

"We feel if we make it a pedestrian-oriented community, it will truly be enduring," said Campbell.

The housing component

Of course, the crux of the Westwood development would be the housing element. Campbell said it would be a mixed-use community with retail, office and row housing – brownstones as in San Francisco, Boston or New York.

"You will see a lot of brick," he said. "You're going to see front doors, porches and patios fronting the street. The whole street will not be entirely commercial (on the first floor). It will be more like a neighborhood and less like a development in and of itself. We're looking for the right mix to create a neighborhood feel so that the homeowners, tenants and community are pleased. There will be more or less 400 for-sale one-, two- and three-bedroom (row) houses. This means people will be there for a long period of time. People will frequent the businesses. Oftentimes, rental units have high turnover and no sense of community. We don't want a place that in 20 years down the road people will look at it and wonder why it was built."

Campbell said, "We have not gone out and sought businesses. We do believe there is some pent up demand for neighborhood businesses. One thing we're contemplating, and we got this idea from Woodinville Village, is selling commercial spaces to get the right tenant in. This would create longevity and do away with turnover. We're fortunate enough to be in the position to be selective."

The officials' comments

Deputy Mayor Stecker said he looks to the CamWest project to "take away the invisible wall that separates the valley from downtown."

"The idea" Stecker said, "would be to draw the tourist district into downtown. The project would also help the city manage its GMA (Growth Management Act) goals without putting undue stress on the city's existing neighborhood infrastructure."

Councilman Mike Roskind said he has not seen any proposals but wants to make sure that the developer contributes to the grid road system (per the city's Grid Road Ordinance).

"If the project goes through," he said, "we will be replacing 125 housing units that have stable, elderly individuals who have lower traffic counts with 400 housing units, (whose owners) will all have more active traffic characteristics."

Roskind also said he was interested in how the development would affect the city and how well the community would accept the project.

Woodinville Mayor Cathy VonWald and City Councilman Scott Hageman did not respond to requests for comments on the CamWest project.

Executive Director of the Woodinville Chamber of Commerce John Erdman said, "Everything I've seen so far that has to do with the project is just awesome."

Mayor Mark Lamb of Bothell worked with Campbell on a project proposal for a site near Mill Creek. The project preserved 50 acres of Little Bear Creek Watershed and, with a very creative plan, said Lamb, protected a significant portion of the site in open space.

"I think Eric has done a very good job on design standards and environmental stewardship," said Lamb. "As a result of focusing on those two values, he has managed to make development succeed where others have failed. ... The main thing about Eric is that he has the fortitude to see something through. He has the willingness and persistence to stay with a project and see it through when other developers might leave."

Readers may know that by 2013, Lake Washington Technical College expects to have a satellite campus in Duvall. Planners must come up with 10 contiguous acres for the campus. Campbell's CamWest Development will be donating 5 acres as an in-kind contribution to the project.

Charles McWilliams, vice president of administrative services for the college, said, "Eric's support of Lake Washington Technical College and our plans to build a branch campus in Duvall is of the highest caliber."

The storied past

If you peel back the layers of the Canterbury Square story, longtime Woodinville residents and former owners of the Canterbury Square property Al and Donna DeYoung play a big part. In 1993, when their daughter Lucy DeYoung was mayor of the city, the DeYongs applied for a rezone of the Canterbury mobile home park from R-18 (Residential, 18 dwelling units per acre) to RB (Regional Business), which was granted in July 1994.

Apparently, some tenants of the park, and others, were not happy with the rezone and challenged it in King County Superior Court, suing the city and the DeYongs, in hopes of invalidating it.

Mediation brought a tentative agreement to the parties, and a Settlement Agreement between the DeYongs and the Canterbury Criers Association was signed and dated July 10, 1995.

The agreement said the two parties would execute a purchase and sale agreement. In 12 years from the date of closing (2008), the Canterbury Association would have the property appraised, listed with a broker and sold for \$10 million.

"The intent of this paragraph," the agreement stated, "is to allow the property to be used hereafter for its highest and best use, in the view of DeYongs' desire that the property eventually be part of the downtown business / commercial core of Woodinville and used for business / commercial purposes."

The agreement also stated that the Canterbury Criers Association or its successors agreed not to have the park down-zoned from its RB zone or comparable business / commercial zone prior to 15 years from the date of closing (2011), and "to exercise their reasonable efforts to carry out the intent of this agreement."

Mrs. DeYoung said in a phone conversation, "We can take legal action to block the sale of the (Canterbury) property."

"They're not going to develop it in the way they agreed to when they purchased it," said Mr. DeYoung.

Mrs. DeYoung said, "Now the time has come for them to sell. They have to abide by this agreement."

The DeYongs said in a phone conversation that the Canterbury Association came to them with the settlement agreement.

"If the property were appraised for \$10 million in 12 years," said Mrs. DeYoung, "then it would be sold for commercial / business purposes. It's a restriction on everyone's deed put on as a result of the lawsuit."

She said every year, more and more Canterbury tenants were not keeping up their properties. Now the park is deteriorated, she said. She and her husband could see this coming 10 years ago.

"Canterbury is the biggest face Woodinville has on the South Bypass," said Mrs. DeYoung. "We didn't want the city to be saddled with this old trailer park. We just tried to use some common sense. (Before the lawsuit), we were up against the city council. We said, look, zone this commercial or we'd put on these 600 apartments. That put the fear of God in the council. Waterford had just put in 360 units (and the council could well imagine what a 600-unit development might look like)."

Mr. DeYoung said they could have built up to 1,150 apartments on the property, but the family didn't want to do that. He said it had long been the DeYoung family's vision to have the land be used for business or commercial purposes.

"It's the last commercial piece of property in downtown Woodinville," said Mrs. DeYoung. "Just think of the commercial development that (property could) bring to downtown," he said.

The city perspective

According to Marie Stake, Woodinville's communications coordinator, the property is currently zoned "Central Business District," which allows for 35 dwelling units per acre, more if the developer meets certain criteria. She said the Downtown Master Plan and the current city code encourage mixed-use development. She also said CamWest has not submitted a site plan, nor has it filed an application or pre-application.

"The sale (of Canterbury Square) is a private matter not involving the City of Woodinville," said Stake.

The recent letter

A June 21 letter from the DeYoungs' attorney addressed to the Canterbury Criers Association and two City of Woodinville officials stated, "... Multi-family housing is inconsistent with the Deed covenant and the promise in the Settlement Agreement. Accordingly, please be advised, and you are hereby put on notice, that any attempt to redevelop the property for multi-family residential purposes will be met with swift and appropriate action to prohibit such and to enforce the terms of the Settlement Agreement and the Deed restriction.

"... The DeYoungs are truly hopeful that an action to enforce the Settlement Agreement and the Deed covenant will not be necessary but they are fully prepared to initiate and prosecute the same should that be necessary.

"If our understanding of the facts ... is incorrect, we invite you to let us know. ..."

The stakeholders' wishes

Mrs. DeYoung said in a phone conversation that she genuinely wanted to know what the people of this community wanted on this property.

Developer Eric Campbell said, "My hope is that we can reach a solution that works for everyone. We believe the project complies with the agreement of record and puts the city's vision (for downtown) in place."