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Largest residential development:

Mt. Park became a part of Lake Oswego, doubling the city's tax base and population

By TOM MACAULAY
Staff Reporter

From almost any point on Mt. Sylvania, the view east looks over most of Clackamas County, even to the farthest reaches of the county on the slopes of Mt. Hood. In the 1960s, however, that view was reserved for the five property owners of the mountain and the few people who traveled Kerr Road between Lake Oswego and Portland.

Today, approximately 10,000 people live on the mountain and enjoy the view and that figure will increase to 12,000 when the entire 3,600-unit Mt. Park development is complete. And when it is complete, Mt. Park will be Oregon's largest residential development. It has had a profound impact on Lake Oswego, beginning with almost doubling the city's population to more than doubling its assessed valuation and tax base and ending with a development that includes amenities such as open space and recreation facilities that are the envy of many much larger towns.

Back in 1967 Mt. Park was just a dream until Lake Oswego contractor Carl Halvorson was able to consolidate the 575 acres that belonged to the Kerr family with 125 acres owned by four other owners to form the area for development.

For the past 15 to 20 years of Halvorson's 40-year career in construction, his firm has been involved primarily in heavy construction. His company built the Libby Dam and Lake Koocanusa project in Montana and The Dalles and John Day Dams' powerhouses. Mt. Park was quite an abrupt change, although there were previous housing developments. Even today he is building a

200-small lot subdivision along the Columbia River in Clark County and a 150-unit condominium development called Little Whale Cove in Depoe Bay.

"We wanted to have some kind of housing for median income and housing for median income and up," he said describing what he envisioned for Mt. Park. "We wanted a continuous mix all through the development. We didn't want a homogeneous mix, a little enclave of apartments over here, townhouses over there, and single family homes over here."

It was Halvorson's idea for his firm to build the roads, make lot improvements, and construct the common buildings such as the recreation center for Mt. Park, and then sell individual lots to other builders and developers to construct apartments, homes and condominiums, all of which would be subject to approval by a design review committee so the entire project would blend together and styles would mesh rather than form a stark contrast. "We wanted to do something nice on a broad scale," he said. "We tried to design it pretty well."

And while Halvorson has put his stamp on the development from an engineering standpoint, he has also added personal touches to Mt. Park, much the same as an artist signs his paintings.

The names of the streets through the area were his own choices, and he divided the areas of Mt. Park by grouping them according to Shakespearean characters — Falstaff, Hotspur and Othello — or great composers — Gershwin, Sibelius, Bartok — or great artists — Botticelli, El Greco, da Vinci — and great writers and

philosophers — Cervantes, Aquinas, Erasmus.

Halvorson also had an area for birds and named the collector streets — Jefferson, McNary and Monroe parkways — for American statesmen. Researching the names could provide an education to any reader.

And then there was the numbering of homes which are all below 100, reflecting Halvorson's preference for low numbers.

Even Mt. Park was deliberately chosen from a list of ideas because it "had the right image and phonetically sounded good. I think it's a good name," Halvorson said.

One of Mt. Park's design features was having collector streets such as McNary Parkway, Mt. Jefferson Terrace and Kerr Road with no driveways entering these streets. Halvorson explained this made traffic flow much easier and also allowed controlled access to the main thoroughfares from the residential areas.

Other features of the development include a recreation center highlighted by its 50-meter swimming pool, tunnels for walking underneath roads, and more than 180 acres of open space and parks.

It is the intermingling of various types of housing — apartments, homes and condominiums — that makes Mt. Park unique.

But as a decade long development, Mt. Park has not been without its headaches. Halvorson explained that while his basic philosophy toward the entire project has remained unchanged, the philosophy of the Lake Oswego City Council and the Planning Commission has changed as the

individual members have changed over the past 10 or 12 years.

"There is a propensity on the part of those agencies not to honor what their predecessors have agreed to," he said.

As an example, he pointed to the promised improvement to Kerr Road. Although the land has been deeded to the city for widening the road, Halvorson said the city has backed out and used the money for improvements on the Oswego Bridge on State Street.

"This is a principal artery and we didn't push to get it done," he said. "We've deeded the land to have it widened."

Halvorson also complained that the City Council "unilaterally changed the concept of the Town Center," which was to be Mt. Park's principal commercial area.

"Anybody would be crazy to even try it today," he said of trying to develop a project the size of Mt. Park.

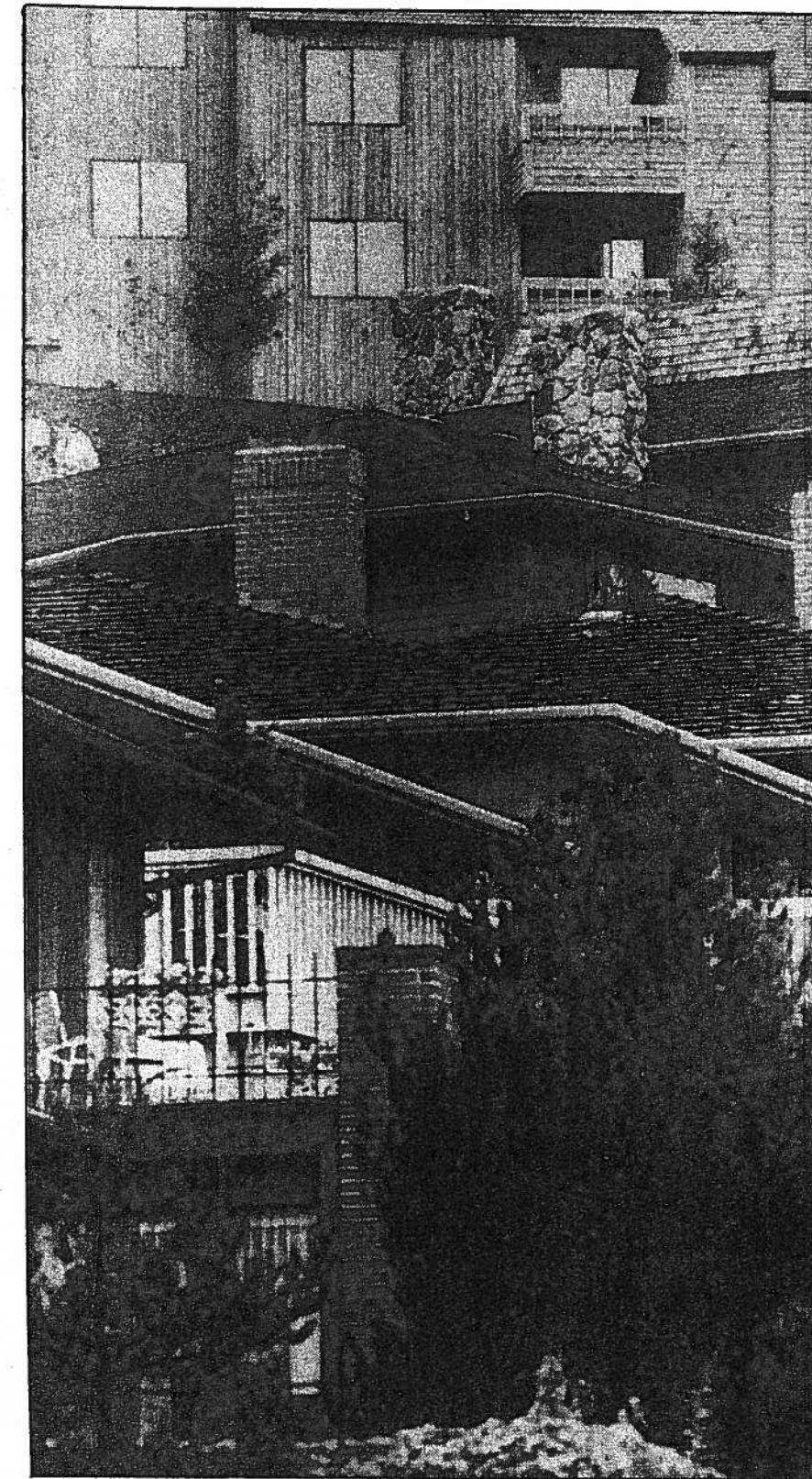
When questioned about how he might change Mt. Park if he were starting today, Halvorson said he would make it entirely single family, very expensive homes. He explained that too many philosophies enter the picture over a long-term development and this was one of the major reasons why a similar project of any magnitude would be extremely difficult.

"Just look at what's going on down at Westlake," he said as an example of a development that has been besieged with problems.

And while the final phase of Mt. Park's development has been turned over to the Daon Corporation, Halvorson can look with pride on the impact his dream has had upon the city.

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MOUNTAIN PARK



Development in Mt. Park, which rises above Lake Oswego, includes single family homes and clusters of condominiums.