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CALGARY HERALD

Building a legacy: Multi-million-dollar project on site of former gravel quarry

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Although the Quarry Park project has been making headlines due to its innovative approach to development in Calgary, there's more to it than just sticks and bricks, says an urban design consulting firm.

"This may be a legacy project," says Steve Shawcross of the IBI Group.

"Remington Development Corp. is interested in doing something different and unique -- a mixed-use development that combines live, work, play, and shop all in the same community. "It's really a lifestyle campus and that's the key."

Consisting of 127 hectares, Quarry Park is to be the redevelopment of the old LaFarge gravel pit adjacent to the Deerfoot Trail in the southeast.

The project is expected to range from \$500 million to \$1 billion.

The development is one of the largest brown field transformations in North America -- and one of the most ambitious, said Bruce Graham, president and CEO of Calgary Economic Development, in an earlier interview.

"Brown field" is a term for land previously used or built upon. The project is "history in the making," said Graham.

Quarry Park is to include 2,300 new homes of all types, including single- and multi-family mixes, along with 32 hectares of parks and natural green space.

The project will also offer more than 90,000 square feet of retail, commercial and office space.

"It includes a decentralized employment node, which meets with the city's vision to have sustainable suburbs," says Shawcross.

"But it goes beyond that, providing a quality of life by connecting areas that are traditionally disconnected spheres. For example, Remington is putting the same energy, care and effort into the planning of the work place as the residential areas, which will all have high esthetic value.

"You'll see pleasing streetscapes with buildings close to the streets and tree-lined boulevards, for example."

A key part of the project was to connect the office and retail component with the residential community -- and that was done through a series of linked open spaces that go through the site.

The area has also been designed to collect stormwater on the surface of the land, rather than in pipes underground, says Sandy Menzies, vice-president of Remington Development Corp.

"As a result, a lot of buildings will connect to recreation areas and water features through the linear paths along those water features," he says. "We have canals in key

locations to take the stormwater down to the river."

A large 6.6-hectare recreational parcel is in the centre of the development. It, too, will be connected to not only the houses, but the office buildings

"It's a strong focal point for families, but the office component will also be part of the system," says Menzies.

The nearby Bow River will be a main feature of the project and it will be surrounded by 20 hectares of environmental reserve.

"It's a big chunk of land, so it was nice to try to create the opportunity to open it up," he says.

Instead of a traditional development -- where large, expensive lots back onto the obvious river amenity -- Remington has opted to leave the area as open as possible.

"Historically, lots are right to the river, but as part of this development, the regional bike paths are within the river park and we've decided to go higher with density instead," says Menzies.

Yet the footprint of the buildings will be smaller to allow the area around the multi-family complexes to be "quite porous" so everyone can see and enjoy the river views, including the office workers, he says.

"There will be four parks entering into the environmental reserve as well as the residential -- and those apartment buildings won't be monolithic structures," he says.

At the same time, multi-family housing will be attractive to the office workers.

"We don't know yet what the final product mix will look like, but with the office development, we see a number of workers locating into residential areas," says Menzies. "Our intent is to maintain a distinct character to the area, with strict architectural controls and architecture that complements office, retail and residential."

One and a half million square feet of office space will be created in total. It's the first part of the development to be given the green light by city council, which approved it in July.

The office space is on land that has methane gas underground due to naturally occurring organic material on site.

"The residential area is at the southern end of the property and we want to avoid that methane gas area at all costs, so that will be office space," says Menzies. "There's a limited amount of residential land as a result."

Still, it will include single-family homes next to existing single-family homes in the neighbouring communities of Riverbend and Douglas Glen.

"We'll concentrate the townhouses and three-and four storey apartments next to the river," he says. "We can go as high as seven storeys there."

All of those plans add up to good urban design, says Shawcross, who helped design the community. "They are creating a total living environment which, in turn, improves the quality of life for office personnel as well as residents."

Part of the concept was taken from Shawcross's recent experiences in Europe, where he lived in several small towns and villages for a year, observing the dynamics and how the people relate to their environment.

"In one area of Quarry Park, we will have Euro-styled squares at the ends of the streets, with high buildings framing a square," he says. "The multi-family buildings all have a commercial base that will spill out into the square -- and they're all connected through a lineal path that's European in nature."

The character of the community is taken "to all elements," including street lamps, entry gates, a stone and iron bridge, the facades of the office complexes, and the exteriors of the homes, says Shawcross.

Each will set the tone for the neighbourhood, he says.

Although not finalized, the architectural theme will likely reflect a historic setting -- again reminiscent of European villages.

The development is located along 24th Street S.E. between the Bow River and the two communities adjacent to Deerfoot Trail.

By completion, more than 2,000 housing units will be built, with the mix likely to be about 1,500 condos, 300 townhouses, and 250 single-family homes.

The business centre will create 7,000 to 8,000 jobs.

The first phase of office buildings will include the 350,000-square-foot Jacobs Engineering building.

The company, which has 2,000 employees, is the first to relocate to the area. The building will be ready in two years.

"When it's done, Remington will leave a legacy of place," says Shawcross.

In Short:

DEVELOPMENT: Quarry Park.

AREA: Between Riverbend and Douglas Glen neighbourhoods along 24th Street S.E. in the southeast.

DEVELOPER: Remington Development Corp.

PROJECT: A \$500-million to \$1-billion development on 125 hectares of land that was once a LaFarge gravel pit. It will include nearly one million square feet of office/commercial/retail space, about 2,300 homes of all types, and 32 hectares of parks and natural green space -- including a comprehensive stormwater runoff system of water features that empty to the Bow River along linear paths throughout the neighbourhood.

STATUS: City council approved the development in July and the first phase of office buildings will be started this year, with a two-year occupancy. With 2,000 employees, Jacobs Engineering is the first company has announced plans to relocate there.

Illustration:

- Colour Photo: Courtesy, IBI Group / A tentative artist's concept of how the streetscape Quarry Park might appear, including shops with heritage-style condo buildings.
- Colour Photo: Steve Shawcross

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