

\$600-million resort planned for Ucluelet:; [Final Edition]

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Project to feature Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, hotels, shops

A **\$600-million** oceanfront golf and **resort** development is **planned** for the small, remote community of **Ucluelet** on Vancouver Island's rugged west coast.

The 370-acre project by Marine Drive Properties, one of the largest seen on Vancouver Island, will feature a Jack Nicklaus- designed golf course, two hotels, single-family and multi-family homes, 2,000 square metres of commercial space and a marina. On one side of the development will be the Pacific Ocean, on the other, Ucluelet Inlet.

It's a huge project for the town, which has a population of just 1,650.

"It is going to change the face of Ucluelet," predicted Geoff Lyons, Ucluelet economic development officer and district chief administrative officer.

"Everything is happening at once. We are just being inundated with development applications."

While the Island's west coast has been a hot spot for development in recent years, most of it has occurred in Tofino, north of Ucluelet. The area is home to the spectacular Pacific Rim National Park with its kilometres-long beaches, whale watching, storm watching, and fishing charters.

A year ago, the 132-unit Black Rock Oceanfront Resort planned for Ucluelet sold out in four hours, with \$50 million in real estate changing hands. Excavation has started on the project, planned as part of a 40-hectare resort community, with investment expected to reach \$100 million.

Lyons expects the new developments in Ucluelet will boost the town's population to 4,000 in the next 10 to 15 years.

Marine Drive Properties' development plans for Ucluelet are in a similar league with other major golf and resort projects on the Island, such as Bear Mountain in Langford and Crown Isle in Courtenay.

Marine Drive Properties is headed by Elke Loof-Koehler, who has developed other projects in the Ucluelet area, including the Tauca Lea Resort and Spa, and the 100-acre Oceanfront Resort Development.

Construction on roads, services and the golf course has begun on the new project, said Stephen Duke, director of sales and marketing for Marine Drive Properties. One section of the land has already been rezoned for development, and the final vote on the portion by the inlet goes to council Aug. 22.

The 18-hole golf course will be a Jack Nicklaus Signature course, meaning he alone is the designer, Duke said. The course, which will face both the Pacific and inlet and be linked by tunnels under the road which cuts through the property, is scheduled to be finished in two years.

Nicklaus, with a record 18 major professional championships to his credit, has designed or co-designed about 250 golf courses over the past four decades.

Currently there are four Nicklaus courses completed in B.C.: At Bear Mountain, Whistler, Kelowna and James Island off Sidney. The Kelowna and James Island courses are Signature courses.

Various components of the development will be sold over the next several years, Duke said.

A key feature is the Signature Circle, featuring 30 lots of oceanfront or ocean views, from half an acre to three-quarters of an acre in size. These will have access to a private putting green, a helicopter pad and a park. Lots range in price from \$1.3 million to more than \$2 million, Duke said.

Sales of 210 strata-titled units in a condominium-hotel are planned for spring 2007, he said. It will be an internationally branded hotel, with the name likely announced this fall, he said. A second 125-unit hotel is also planned, along with about 1,000 residential units.

A total of 70 per cent of the land is to be preserved as green space, including the golf course, 36 acres of dedicated park space, and protective covenants on trees, Duke said.

Ucluelet Counc. Dario Corlazzoli calls the project a positive step, but predicted Ucluelet will no longer be "the little town we know."

Still, he said with the downturn in the fishing and forestry, the traditional economic backbone of coastal communities, "If we don't open our doors to development, then we really are sunk."

As for environmental issues, local resident Jur Bekker is pleased the developer is aiming at the "rigorous" certification with Audubon International's Signature Program, which promotes environmental management practices and requires that courses document results. Bekker is part of the ad hoc Ucluelet Community Development Task Force, created in response to the increase in development.

"It sounded pretty good to us. We will just have to see what happens from now on."