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Work starts on Clearwater Commons co-housing community near Bothell

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Work has started on Clearwater Commons, a co-housing development near Bothell that has been in the works since 2006.

A group of seven families bought the 7.4-acre site on North Creek in 2006. It is just north of Bothell and 11 miles north of Seattle.

The families worked with Chad and Lisa Port of Banyon Tree Design to create the co-housing complex. Cascade Built is the contractor. The families had previously worked together to found Clearwater School, which is across the street from the housing site.



Image courtesy of Clearwater Commons [\[enlarge\]](#)

Clearwater Commons will have five detached houses, 10 townhouses and a common house. Eight lots are still for sale and prices start at \$150,000.

Clearwater Commons will have 16 residences: five detached houses, 10 townhouses and a common house. Eight lots are for sale and prices start at \$150,000. Buyers can choose from two construction plans, starting at \$400,000. The plans include the lot, and the price varies based on the design and finish package.

Cascade Built has started the first phase of four units, which will be done in the spring. More units must be pre-sold before moving forward with other phases.

Tom Campbell is project manager for Clearwater and part of one of the founding families. He said permitting and construction financing have been "amazingly difficult," and taken more time and money than originally planned.

Campbell said financing was "the most troublesome." He considered 14 banks before securing financing from Cobalt Mortgage and Capital Resource Group.

Construction was originally expected to start in the summer of 2009, but permitting took about three years.

While waiting to break ground, the group worked with Snohomish County on a \$400,000 voluntary restoration of a quarter-mile portion of North Creek that runs through the school and commons site.

That project was done by Aquatic Construction of Oregon, and completed construction in September. It involved installing back channels, salmon recovery and other work to improve wetlands and water quality.

The Clearwater Commons team is focusing on low impact development, or LID. The site will not discharge any stormwater into the area's water treatment system because stormwater will be infiltrated into the ground.

"We're probably the most comprehensive LID development in the Puget Sound basin. I'd say that without a doubt, because of all the things we've done," Campbell said.

All the houses will use advanced framing to minimize the use of materials and allow for greater insulation, low-toxin materials, a heat-recovery ventilation system, and a pin-pile foundation rather than a poured concrete foundation to allow shallow ground water to move through the site. This will preserve ground water flow paths for the wetlands.

The pin-pile system will place the houses a minimum of 30 inches above the ground, like an elevated treehouse, Campbell said, so water can flow beneath them. Campbell said the piles reduce the amount of impervious area.

He said the group wanted to go further with low impact development efforts but was limited by county regulations.

Campbell said it's been an interesting process, since he helped develop the state's Growth Management Act. He now does large-scale public engagement consulting, and has worked on the World Trade Center site in New York City and rebuilding New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

The Clearwater Commons team recently announced that the Mini-B Passive House, developed by Joe Giampietro, will become part of the project. The structure will be used as an educational center to show how passive house technology can be used to reduce energy consumption. It will also be a guest house.

The structure originally was located in the parking lot of Phinney Neighborhood Center.

Other team members include 2020 Engineering, engineer; The Watershed Co., wetland biologist; LMH Construction, site development; and GeoEngineers, stream restoration.

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