

Newberg plan would pair wine with resort

Growth | The 433-acre site would include a hotel, spa and homes in one of the state's largest such projects

By **DANA TIMS**
THE OREGONIAN

Oregon entrepreneur and philanthropist Joan Austin will outline plans this morning for one of Oregon's largest multiuse developments at the western gateway to the state's wine industry.

The project, tentatively dubbed

Springbrook Properties in a nod to the area's history, will occupy 433 acres in the northeast portion of fast-growing Newberg.

It will include a luxury inn, spa, restaurant, shops, open spaces and trails and 1,200 units of housing ranging from town

houses to custom, high-end single-family residences. The project coincides with major state overtures linking tourism with Yamhill County's burgeoning wine country and should receive a tremendous boost from increased tourism traffic in the region.

"This is the next step for wine country as it develops for the first time a true destination-resort

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Newberg: Philanthropist sees project as part of legacy

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component," said Mimi Doukas, land-use planning director for WRG Design, a company involved in planning efforts. "We're seeing a fantastic synergy developing out there."

The project is no less important for the city of Newberg, once a sleepy farm town that is now fully within the gravitational pull of the Portland metro area. The city's current population, already up by more than 5,000 residents over 1995 levels, is projected to exceed 38,000 by 2025.

"In terms of anything we have now, this is huge," said Robert Soppe, a Newberg City Council member. "This will present significant growth-related challenges, but at least we'll get to plan this all at once, rather than in a bunch of little pieces."

Austin and her husband, Ken, have accumulated pieces of land in northeast Newberg for years. The proposed development will be located not far from A-dec, the company they co-founded in 1964 that is now considered the largest manufacturer of dental chairs and equipment in the world.

A-dec, which employs nearly 1,000, is Newberg's largest company.

However, Springbrook Properties won't be an A-dec development.

Austin, saying she wants the project to represent part of her family's legacy in the area, has assembled what she called an "A-team of consultants" to assume all planning and development duties.

"We have had many offers over the years from developers who wanted to purchase our property," she said in a statement. "We could have sold and lost control of the quality or the way it would look and feel."

Key team members include WRG Design, which has overseen development of residential communities, retail centers and industrial parks around the Northwest and California; Arnstad & Associates, headed by Mary Arnstad, which markets and manages hotels, resorts and semi-private residential communities; and Bruce C. Hraba, president of Waterford Hotels in California. Hraba also serves as president and chief operating officer of the Silverado Country Club and Resort, a 1,200-acre Napa Valley property.

Springbrook's proposed hotel marks the second time this year that a developer has moved to build what would be Yamhill County's first true destination-point luxury hotel.

David Kahn, a Portland developer and basketball executive, has already won approval from the Yamhill County Board of Commissioners to build a 50-room luxury hotel

Springbrook Properties

What: A proposed 433-acre, multiuse development in northeast Newberg



Who: Lead developer is Joan Austin, co-founder of A-dec, considered the world's largest manufacturer of dental

chairs and supplies.

Details: Luxury inn, spa, restaurant, shops, 1,200 housing units, 50 acres of greenspace, multiuse trails for pedestrians and bicyclists, and community parks.

What's ahead: Formal permits are expected to be filed soon. Groundbreaking could get under way as early as next spring.

on land now zoned for agricultural purposes in the Dundee Hills.

A group of 25 Oregon wineries is fighting Kahn's proposal, saying that while the facility may be needed to accommodate the growing popularity of Oregon's wine country, anything as large as a hotel should be built inside an urban growth boundary on land already zoned for commercial purposes.

That theme is re-emerging as the Springbrook Properties proposal moves forward.

"The site the Austin family has

chosen emphasizes that a hotel in a beautiful location doesn't have to come at the expense of the land-base the wine industry needs in order for economic growth," Susan Sokol Blosser, president of Sokol Blosser Winery in Dayton, wrote in a recent letter to the Yamhill County commissioners.

Allowing potential vineyard land to be converted to commercial uses, she added, "will be disastrous for our industry."

From an economic-development standpoint, both hotels probably will fill lucrative but different niches in Oregon's rapidly growing wine and tourism culture, said Eric Fruits with ECONorthwest.

Kahn's proposal aims at a higher step on the resort food chain and needs a rural setting, preferably surrounded by vineyards, to succeed at luring well-to-do travelers from Oregon and elsewhere willing to pay \$300 a night and up to stay there, he said. A resort in the urbanized area of Newberg, Fruits added, would complement, rather than substitute for, the proposed rural development Kahn envisions.

Newberg's Springbrook area dates to Oregon's early European settlers, who at one point built a cannery that thrived on shipping peaches, pears and berries around the world. Depleted soils and changing markets eventually slowed production, prompting many area farmers to replace their fruit crops with the filberts and walnuts that still constitute a healthy portion of Yamhill County's agricultural economy.

Although formal development plans have yet to be filed with the

city, groundbreaking for the hotel is expected to begin sometime next spring, with the restaurant and spa following close behind. Opening is planned for 2009.

Construction on the housing component may begin in late 2007 or early 2008, said Sonja Haugen, Springbrook project manager.

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