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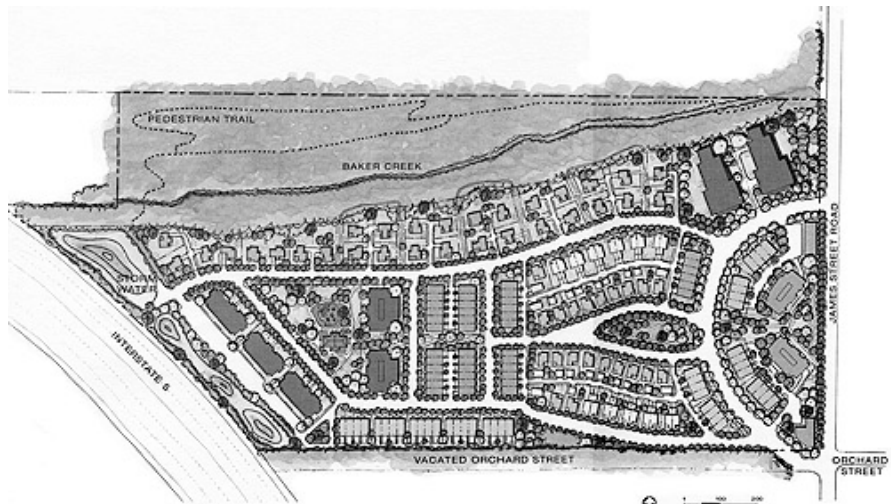
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## 42-acre development planned for Mt. Baker neighborhood



courtesy of Weber & Thompson

### Heidi Schiller

A local developer is planning a new 42-acre mixed-use project along James Street Road and Orchard Street.

Plans for Meadow Ridge Park include 369 residential units and 10,000 square feet of commercial space, as well as a community building and trail system, according to documents from the city's planning department. The property is located east of I-5, north of Orchard Street and west of James Street Road in the Mt. Baker neighborhood.

The developer, Peggy Gregory, met with the planning department for a pre-application meeting in July. Gregory would not return repeated calls for an interview for this story.

The development, which was designed by Seattle-based Weber + Thompson Architects, will be built in phases. The first phase, which includes 30 single-family lots, has already been approved by the city. The project's future plans also include two mixed-use buildings, one commercial building, and a mix of housing types, including:

- 30 units of single-family residences (the initial phase)
- 21 units of single-family cottages
- 22 units of duplexes
- 70 units of row-houses
- 16 units of live/work row houses
- 170 units in multi-family stacked flats
- 34 units in mixed-use stacked flats over commercial space.

The development has also been accepted as one of two pilot projects in Bellingham for the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Neighborhood Development program, which applies green building standards and ratings to new developments, said Catherine Benotto, principal architect for Weber + Thompson. The Georgia-Pacific waterfront site is the other Bellingham project that has been accepted for the program.

Benotto said she could not comment on the project's timeline or cost.

Meanwhile, the city's Public Works Department is working with a consultant to study the feasibility of creating a road connection adjacent to the site from Birchwood Avenue to James Street Road via Orchard Street, through a currently unused underpass, said Brent Baldwin, development manager for public works. That portion of Orchard Street is currently vacated, but the city would likely ask for rededication of it from the developer, city planner Brian Smart said.

The site is home to Baker Creek, but the project's plans mitigate any wetland issues by designating about a fourth of the land area to preserve the creek, Smart said. The developers will also improve James Street and create a public trail system in conjunction with the city's parks department that links with the Bay to Baker Trail from west of I-5 to James Street Road through the unused underpass.

The developers originally applied for the initial phase of development in May 2005, which was approved in January 2006. In September 2006, the developers applied to rezone the property to allow a higher density and some commercial uses, which were approved in December 2006, according to city planning department documents.

The next step will be to complete permit applications for planned development and go through design review, Smart said.

The project is just the type of infill the city is looking for, he said, with its small lots and mix of housing types, including single-family residences, condos and apartments.

"This type of development allows for ownership and rentals, and creates a small micro community," he said. Ideally, the development would encourage

apartment renters to buy into a small townhouse, and eventually trade up for a single-family home, he said.