

Rathdrum's Radiant Lake on the rise

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Mike McPhee, a partner in the Radiant Lake project, and Nancy Gagner, business manager, look over the manmade lake from a home being built there by North Lake Homes during a tour on Thursday.

Project will be visible from Highway 41 in a few days after a pair of fountains spring up

RATHDRUM -- Whitecaps on the Rathdrum Prairie may sound impossible, but a brisk breeze was all it took to whip up the waters of Radiant Lake last week.

Yes, there is a lake on the prairie, filled with water and soon to be surrounded by new homes.

"Why would you put a lake in North Idaho?" is a question people often ask about this manmade oval lake with an island in the middle, said Kent Jobe, president of North Lake Homes and builder of some of the 200-plus houses going into the project just off Highway 41 at the entrance to Rathdrum.

"How much is lakefront?" is his response.

With prices beginning around \$500,000, Radiant Lake is not "affordable housing," but it's a lot less than the price of a home on Lake Coeur d'Alene or the Spokane River, Jobe said.

He was showing his model home in the project on Thursday, a 2,881-square-foot, four-bedroom, 2 1/2-bath house that, like the rest of the six designs he's building at Radiant Lake, are getting a few special touches.

Those include high-efficiency recirculating hot water for nearly instant hot water.

"It wastes less that you would waiting for the shower to heat up," Jobe said.

Other details include a dryer box recessed for flush wall installation, surround sound prewired into rooms and extra insulation for quietness.

"As a builder, I do things different," he said.

He says his \$500,000 home compares to a \$650,000 to \$700,000 home at Hayden Lake.

Among the custom touches are Anderson windows capable of withstanding 140 mph winds without damage, well under the gales that frequently blow across the Rathdrum Prairie.

"They're significantly better," Jobe said.

He came from Boise, where he was renovating century-old houses.

"The trim is like a 100-year-old house, old-world, craftsman style," he said.

"I don't know if we would have made the move if there hadn't been Radiant Lake."

Radiant Lake allows no gas engines, but electric motors can be used, along with kayaks, sailboats and other watercraft.

"It uses less water than farming," Jobe said.

"It only uses 1/6 the water used to irrigate," said Mike McPhee, a partner in the project. Water is recirculated to waterfalls and creeks that run down the middle of streets. It's also used to irrigate common areas.

A pair of fountains will be turned on within a few days, making the project easily visible from Highway 41, and accentuating what Jobe calls "a real water feature."

"Aeration wasn't necessary, but it makes sense to do it right," McPhee said.

The project started at 80 acres, but grew to more than 120 with additional land purchase. It was redesigned eight times.

McPhee and partner Jack Vanderwaal of JCAV, LLC, did two years of research into manmade lakes. They traveled around the country, including California and Arizona studying other lakes, looking at "what they did right, and what they did wrong. The project started four years ago this month," McPhee said.

It was built with a silt liner plus a 3/16-inch thick plastic liner. The Rathdrum Aquifer is 315 feet below. The lake is protected from runoff by curbs that divert lawn chemicals and other runoff under the lake.

"Mike and his partners had a vision," Jobe said. He estimates 40 groups a week visit.

"There's a lot of activity here at Radiant Lake," he said.

Jobe said Rathdrum has one of the best school systems in the state plus a small town feel, and wants to keep the small town integrity with good quality growth.

"We're starting something new out here," he said. "There's definitely a different feel."

Buyers of lots must go through builder, there is a premium for waterfront parcels of up to \$300,000, McPhee.

Jobe said he often has to address concerns that the lake could go dry, or become a breeding ground for mosquitos.

"It can't breed mosquitos," he said. "Stagnant water doesn't exist here. I've never seen a mosquito."

Geese stop and rest, but there's no vegetation to attract them to stay around and create the problems they have at golf courses, where their waste has accumulated, Jobe said. There will be no fish in the lake, which has a maximum depth of about 7 feet.

Radiant Lake has a gentle bank for about 20 feet at two to three feet deep, and a width up to 350 feet, and is 100 feet at its narrowest and 2,250 feet long, McPhee said.

"We landed a float plane on it, and it only took half the length to take off," Jobe said.

The 30 lots on the island are 170 feet deep. There are 66 lake front lots, five on the project's three parks, 117 secondary and tertiary lots, about 30 large enough for an outbuilding that matches the house.

Property owners and guests can walk the entire way around the lake.

Parks will include a covered patio, grills. A sand beach with stadium seating for about 100 and a volleyball court will be used for events. They're planning radio-controlled hydroplane races and kite flying, Jobe said.

"Since it's Rathdrum people think we get a little bit of wind," he said.

And Radiant Lake is perfect for triathlon training, Jobe said, tongue in cheek.

"I can swim a while, then stand up and rest and nobody knows."

Information on Radiant Lake is available at www.radiantlake.com or by calling 772-0632.

North Lake Homes can be reached at 755-7223, and open house information is available at 292-2420.

To get to Radiant Lake from Interstate 90 go north on Highway 41 toward Rathdrum, and turn east on Nagle Road.