Keowee River project gains momentum

Developer expects to begin building houses by end of year

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Construction of the first homes at the highly anticipated Keowee River outdoor adventure community could begin before the end of the year.

Scott Vick, a principal of the $200 million project, said Monday his group is getting engineering plans finalized and is confident of breaking ground in 2010. He said a unique development agreement Oconee County Council gave final approval to last week would help put the master-planned project on a fast track.

"We did something with the county that's never been done," Vick said.

Oconee County Planner Aaron Gadsby said the Planning Department would review Keowee River's preliminary plan based on the development agreement approved last week and not according to established county standards.

By having the county agree ahead of time to road and other construction design standards, the developer would not have to seek variances piecemeal that would delay construction on the 774-acre community.

"We're waiting on them to submit preliminary plans," Gadsby said. "They need to do that before they start any construction."

Vick said the agreement with the county gives Keowee River

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Workers paint the exterior of a renovated house Monday that will be used as temporary office space by the Foothills Area Family YMCA. The building is located next to the future Keowee River project.

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enough design certainty to move ahead with engineering plans.

During the approximately six months it took for the development agreement to get its final approval, developers have been busy behind the scenes to launch their master plan. Vick and his team had their stormwater control plans approved by state regulators and achieved pending permits with the state Department of Transportation.

Vick said the group also purchased an old residence next to the project property that they are preparing as a sales office and temporary space for the Foothills Area Family YMCA.

Anna Connelly, executive director of the area Y, said the organization would move to the temporary location in December. Clemson University, which currently leases space to the Y, is not renewing the lease.

Foothills YMCA announced almost a year ago plans to build a 60,000-square foot, three-story facility to call home within the Keowee River project site.

The Y contracted a Michigan-based consulting firm that is putting together a strategic plan to kick-off a $7 million capital campaign for the new facility. Connelly said the consultant should have a plan designed by September.

Keowee River developers see the Y as an integral part of their outdoor-themed development. Other elements projected over the 20-year build out would include hiking trails, a waterfront park, outdoor amphitheater, hotel and conference center, restaurants, retail shops, single-family homes, townhouses, villas and cottages.



The 774-acre Keowee River project will include a new location for the Foothills Area Family YMCA.

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