Project to offer eco-centric features

Foothills YMCA moving to Lake Hartwell location

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SENECA – A 774-acre development on the backwaters of Lake Hartwell near Newry will focus on the area's outdoor beauty and could become "the adventure destination of the Southeast," the developer said.

The un-gated residential and commercial community on State 130 will include single- and multi-family homes suited for a mix of families and retirees, said Scott Vick, a partner in the Keowee River Preservation Group, which is developing the property.

A 75-acre village center will include upscale coffee houses, fresh-food markets, art galleries, adventure outfitters and locally owned restaurants, Vick said.

A "boutique" hotel will host business conferences and adventure vacationers who want to enjoy area activities from hiking to whitewater rafting.

The development is centered on a love of the outdoors and its cornerstone will be a new dream home for the Foothills Area Family YMCA.

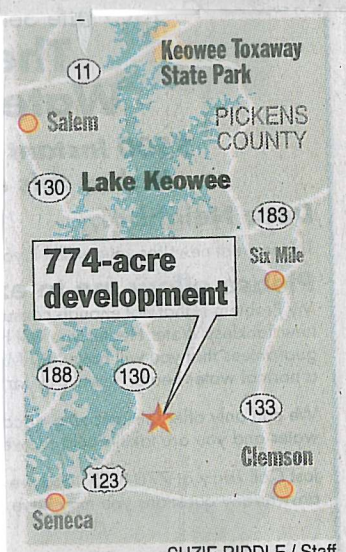
"That YMCA is our big name, our Jack Nicklaus," Vick said. "It is that all inclusive 'everybody gets to come' symbol."

Groundbreaking for the new YMCA – on 8 acres donated by the developer – is planned for spring, said Anna Connelly, executive director of the YMCA that serves hundreds of families in Pickens and Oconee counties. Construction should take a year to 18 months

A capital campaign will be launched soon for the new facility that will include a swimming pool, gymnasium, weight room and other amenities that the YMCA didn't want to invest in on land it didn't own, Connelly said.

The YMCA will continue to offer its programs and

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SUZIE RIDDLE / Staff

PROJECT

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activities on its current site, owned by Clemson University on Lake Hartwell a mile from the main campus, Connelly said.

There also are plans to develop community partnerships with Walhalla, Westminster and Fair Play to offer activities on fields in those communities.

Outdoor recreation will be a big part of the Keowee River development that will include hiking and mountain biking trails and potentially a footbridge to Clemson University's Issaqueena Forest, Vick said.

There'll be no golf course or marina. There will be a community dock for boats. The emphasis will be on flat water paddling, Vick said.

The development will be designed for safe travel by bicycle, golf cart and on foot, as well as for cars.

> "That YMCA is our big name, our Jack Nicklaus."
> Scott Vick

Close to half the property will be kept in a natural state, he said.

Plans call for 900–1,200 residences ranging from single-family homes to rooms in retirement care facilities, Vick said. The project could create roughly 2,000 jobs, he said.

"Keowee River has been designed to honor our heritage yet create a buzz around the community to position for the future and ultimately become a significant draw for Oconee County," Vick said. "Not only will it enhance and promote our active outdoor lifestyle, it will become a significant support system for jobs, businesses and an increased tax base."