

Seniors' housing needs met



Regency Retirement Resort directors Ed Hall (left) and Greg Kornell are joined by Indie at the construction site for the company's new Northwood facility in Kelowna at Cawston and Bernard.

Douglas Farrow/Contributor

By [Barry Gerding - Kelowna Capital News](#)

Published: **September 20, 2011 1:00 AM**

If the latest project for Regency Retirement Resorts is a bell weather of the local economy, then perhaps there is room for some optimism looking ahead.

Back in 2009, Regency was ready to start construction on a \$30-million project at the corner of Gordon Drive and Cawston Avenue in Kelowna, called Northwood Retirement Resort.

It was to be the fourth Regency seniors' facility in the Central Okanagan, joining Sandalwood in North Glenmore, Missionwood in the Mission and Westwood in West Kelowna, all built over the last decade.

But the recession was kicking in and Regency developer Ed Hall elected to wait.

The housing market is a key indicator for Regency's business, as seniors need to be able to sell their homes in order to downsize to independent living on a smaller scale.

As well, Hall said they started looking at ways to lower the entry point for seniors looking to move into Northwood from \$2,200.

"We did some serious brainstorming and came up with some ideas of things we could change that would help lower that number," Hall said.

Those ideas included changing housekeeping and linen service to bi-weekly from weekly, changing the daily bus service for residents from daily to three days a week, reducing the 100+ cable TV package down to the basic service, and having only one entree instead of two for dinner each night.

"We totalled up those changes, and we found a savings of about \$300 a month which put us under the \$2,000 entry point mark," Hall said.

"We were able to do that and still provide the same amenities and level of enrichment leisure services but just slightly toning down the level of some services."

So today, Regency has started construction on Northwood. The complex will be built in two phases—97 units with all the amenities for a spring 2011 completion and a further 64 units later on.

Hall is excited about the Northwood location, as it's central to services that seniors might want, in an area where many seniors already live in apartments or older single-family homes.

"The rental sign just had gone up and the phone started to ring," Hall said. "We knew a lot of seniors lived in the immediate area, in many of the condos that were built in that area of Bernard and Gordon back in the 1980s, so for those seniors the product we are offering is a perfect match for them.

"When you're making a move to a facility like ours, to be able to stay in your own neighbourhood, to be around friends, family and other services you are familiar with is an ideal situation."

The basic package for Northwood rental tenants will come with daily evening meals, transportation, activities and a 24-hour medical alert service.

The public areas will include the kitchen and white tablecloth dining room, fireside lounge with a piano, theatre, book and computer library, activities room with a pool table and shuffleboard, a woodworking shop and spa and fitness facility.

Hall said Regency likes to provide unique attributes to each of their facilities in Kelowna.

For Northwood, that will be a 3,000 square-foot indoor garden in a 20-foot-tall conservatory that is annexed to the dining room, he said. And it will also be the first Regency resort with a home winemaking facility.

Hall said for seniors looking to leave their own home or apartment for a senior's facility is not about giving up independence.

“We argue that in fact you are actually increasing your independence because you no longer have to be dependent on yourself or others for transportation, home maintenance issues, grocery shopping or to maintain a yard. All of that is looked after for you,” Hall said.

“I had someone stop me in the hallway at Missionwood the other day and say they wished they had made the move five years earlier.”

For more information about available Northwood rental units, call 250-762-7344.

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