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Organization's plan for single-family homes off Park Street gets OK from Design Review Board

A proposal by Habitat for Humanity Lakeside to build three single-family homes on a triangular shaped property between Park Street and Moore Road in Port Washington was approved by the city's Design Review Board Monday.

A 12-foot-wide cul-de-sac would connect the property, which is largely hidden, to Park Street, said John Orth, Habitat's construction manager.

"This would be a three-year project," Orth told the board. "We only have enough to start one house this year, but we think we can raise enough funds to do one house a year

"As soon as we get the OK, we will start building the road and grading the property. The earliest we would start construction would probably be June."

Several trees will have to be removed to make room for the houses, which would be about 1,300 square feet, he said.

The houses would each have three or four bedrooms and 1-1/2 bathrooms, and an attached one-car garage.

The bluff will be maintained, Orth said, noting that it is a steep incline.

In the long term, he said, Habitat may consider building a ranch-style house on a flat portion of the property, depending on what happens with a gas main that runs on an easement across the property.

Members of the Design Review Board were pleased with the plan.

"I think it's a really nice looking design," said Chairman Rob Vanden Noven.

However, he asked why the design for each of the houses is the same.

Habitat will save money by using the same design for each of the homes, Orth said, and can better reproduce the design each time it builds the house.

Minor detailing on the houses will vary to give each structure its own identity, he added.

Plans for the development will now be reviewed by the city's Plan Commission on Tuesday, March 27.

Habitat has an accepted offer to purchase the almost one-acre parcel for $44,000 from the

Schanen Estate, Orth said.

The land is along the bluff behind the Habitat's first house in Port Washington. That home was built in 2002 for Jeff and Kandy Bichler.

Habitat expects to choose the family for its first house on this parcel by May or June, Orth said.

The families must have children and be in unaffordable or unsafe housing, have good credit and be able to repay a mortgage to Habitat, he said.

The organization has built houses for seven families, all in Port Washington, and no one has defaulted on their mortgages, Orth said. Monthly payments, including taxes, average $500, Orth said.

"That's why we want three houses. The value of the land can be split between three homeowners so the taxes are affordable," he said.

Lakeside Development of Mequon is designing the project.

The Port project is possible because Habitat sold a 3,600-square-foot house in Erin for $375,000, realizing a $60,000 profit. The house had been donated to Habitat.

Habitat was offered a second house donation, an older house in Mequon that was being renovated and enlarged when the two sisters who owned it died.

The 4,000-square-foot unfinished house could not be moved. The new owner decided to tear it down and build a smaller one. He told Orth that Habitat could take whatever it wanted before the wrecking ball struck it.

"We removed all the interior walls, trim, duct work, furnaces, air conditioners and light fixtures that we will use in the Habitat houses," Orth said.

"We have enough 2-by-4s to build one house and recessed light fixtures for one house, so the first house won't cost as much."

Salvaged items sold on Craig's List raised $12,000 for Habitat, Orth said.

Habitat expected its next project would be in Grafton, where it owns land, but Orth said village officials raised concerns each time they proposed building three single-family or duplex condos on the property.

If Habitat were able to purchase land in another community in the coming years, there is a possibility the Port project could take more than three years to complete, Habitat president Alan Schupp said Monday.