

# Developers eye Beach for 240-acre development

Bryan Horwath | The Dickinson Press | Published January 11, 2013

BEACH — Although it has been on the fringes of recent Bakken oil play-related development, the city of Beach could soon be changing.

In the next few years, the town of just more than 1,000 people could nearly double in population thanks to a proposed 240-acre development that would sit just north of Interstate 94 on land that has been annexed by the city.

Representatives from Bakken Development Fund, a Salt Lake City-based company, were in Beach this week, coinciding with a Vision West ND meeting on Wednesday. The development — which has yet to go before the city council — would be split into two parcels of 160- and 80-acres each.

The space would potentially be home to single-family housing, apartments, retail space and industrial uses. BDF managing member Drew Hall said as many as 380 single-family residences could be constructed.

“We did our due diligence and this was an area — for many reasons — that we were attracted to,” Hall said. “We looked at other sites in places like Dickinson, Minot, Watford City and Williston, but we really liked Beach. We’re in a transportation corridor here with the interstate and with rail and we expect drilling activity to move to the southwest eventually.”

With approval from the city, Hall said work could begin on several industrial lots on the first 80-acre parcel as early as this spring. He said he doesn’t anticipate any residential units to be constructed until after 2013.

“That’s what we’re looking at now, but the market will dictate how that goes,” Hall said. “What we’d like to happen is for this to become an extension of the community in Beach. We’re looking at building structures that are sustainable — something that, in five or six years, people will think is really well done.”

Prairie West Development Foundation executive director Deb Walworth said she thinks growth is a good thing, as long as it’s planned well.

“The more time we have to plan and get ready for this type of growth, the better off we’ll be,” Walworth said. “I think this could be a really good thing for our community. I’m all for growth, as long as it’s controlled chaos and we don’t get mowed over like some other communities that have been hit hard.”

Walworth also serves on the Vision West ND Golden Valley steering committee, which is also looking at plans for a possible new medical clinic. Walworth said Beach has outgrown its tiny Beach Medical Center, which is managed by St. Joseph’s Hospital and Health Center out of Dickinson.

“We need a new medical wellness center,” Walworth said. “That’s something that we’re going to discuss further at our next steering committee meeting. We’re going to dream big and see what happens. I think we’re situated as kind of a mini-hub in between Dickinson and Glendive. I hope we can pull this off.”

Hall said his company just recently learned of the talks for a new medical center and said BDF would be interested having it built on the proposed mixed-use development site.

“We’d love to have it,” Hall said. “We would certainly have to learn more about it, but I think that would be a great fit.”

With a possible booming new development in the works, one question that looms is whether or not Beach would lose any of its small town charm. Jerry DeMartin, who lives in Beach and, along with his wife Tama Smith, runs Prairie Fire Pottery, said he doesn’t think so.

“You might lose a little of that, but I think, in general, this would be a good thing for the community and a good thing for businesses,” DeMartin said. “It would be a change. They’re saying somewhere in the neighborhood of 700 new people could be moving in — that’s almost twice what our population is. I think growth is adding to our community, though, in terms of diversity and interesting people moving in.”