

**HartMarin  
Real Estate Consultants**

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HartMarin is developing the first affordable housing project of single family detached homes in California by a private developer without government funds.

**R**ob Hart spent 28 years in real estate development, much of it in high-end construction and resort development. But two years ago, he says, "I blew up. I drew a line in the sand and said 'No more. I'm going to do my own development, and do it the right way.'" Instead of using all his knowledge to maximize somebody's profit, Hart is now using his knowledge of "green" building techniques to build affordable homes.

His first project in Novato is Virginia Grove, a development of eight small homes at 1845 Virginia Ave.

The homes are smaller than most, Hart says, but "they are the size that

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**How can a real estate developer improve the social condition? Ask HartMarin**

homes used to be in Novato: 1,100 to 1,300 square feet.

Each has three bedrooms and two baths, and they are all pre-wired for photovoltaic cells. If you buy a home and later want to upgrade to solar electric, you can.

"We're the first developer in the Bay Area to install a passive solar temperature balancing system" in our affordable homes, Hart continues. "The homes are designed to be less costly to maintain as well as less costly to build. That is green building."

At press time the underground utilities were still going into Virginia Grove. But when the homes are available they will sell in the range of \$300 to \$400K, Hart states, making them affordable to people who earn less than Marin County's median income. Some are as high as \$675K, but people who make just



Artist rendering courtesy of HartMarin.

a little over the median income should still be able to afford them. Working with lenders who specialize in workforce housing projects, such as Bank of America, helps keep costs down, Hart states.

A fifth generation Marinite, Hart says his company "is trying to do responsible real estate development that helps bring communities together to support positive change. Our projects focus on protecting the environment and improving social conditions."

Hart looks on the Virginia Grove project as environ-

mentally friendly for a number of reasons:

"We're re-using a piece of property and turning it into something better. Infill housing puts people closer to jobs and services, thus reducing energy and resource use on a large scale. Instead of building new power and sewer lines out into the suburbs, we're re-using the existing infrastructure. Instead of cutting down the trees that were in the way, we transplanted them; now every home will have a mature, producing fruit tree in its front yard.

"We are a pioneer compa-

ny," Hart states. "Cities are losing their middle class, so we're trying to build homes to recapture that population."

"We're doing things that haven't been done before, and the Chamber has been very helpful," he goes on. "I've been able to tap into a brain trust of like-minded individuals through the Chamber's committees, and the Chamber then helps support our projects through the approval process."

"Housing projects are good for business because they keep the employment base here," Hart states.

In addition to building affordable homes, Hart advises other property owners how they can make similar projects a reality. Hart has lived in Novato for 10 years and plans to continue doing projects here.

"We're trying to create little pocket neighborhoods that allow people to live close to their jobs and services," he concludes.

