



# BREAKING ground

By Sherry Ramsey  
Photos By Jessica Vouk

## WHISPER RIDGE

Many developers buy a piece of land and tear up every blade of grass. People are packed in so close they may as well live in New York or Chicago, instead of North Idaho. That isn't the case with Whisper Ridge, a development along the northeast slope of Schweitzer Mountain. Located just ten minutes from Schweitzer Ski Resort and five minutes from downtown Sandpoint, Whisper Ridge is a deep cleansing breath of inner peace and beauty. Longtime locals, Henry Mire, Joe Mire and Eric Skinner

have a dream for their 70 acres, and intend to see it through.

"We want people to come here and see the beauty and uniqueness," said Skinner. "We are trying to develop Whisper Ridge the way we would want it if we lived here, and one of us is planning to.

"Henry, Joe and I are family and we want to make this special. We don't want to do it halfway

and then be embarrassed to see people in town. 'Something to be proud of', is our underlying theme."

The project will be completed in two phases with only 17 home sites and an additional 48 acres dedicated as common ground for all of the residents. Each home site will be between one and two and one-half acres, with a view so incredible it's hard to walk away from.



The roads will be paved to each home site, with boulders cut in half and set mirror-image at each paved driveway. The main entrance is a gorgeous sample of the quality within, as you pass between two halves of a 12 foot rock, and another with Whisper Ridge engraved into the face. Just beyond the entrance lies a pond and waterfall, complete with an arched bridge. Benches and tables encourage those who love the sound of rushing water to sit and enjoy the moment.

From each home site you can look below and see the city of Sandpoint, snuggled between the Pend Oreille River and Schweitzer Mountain. To the south, Bottle Bay is clearly visible as the river branches off toward Hope and splits around the islands. To the east, the Cabinet Mountain Range stands tall and majestic, back dropped by the mountains of western Montana. To the north, on a clear day, the views span almost to Bonners Ferry.

From above, Sandpoint appears as a patchwork quilt of trees and neighboring farms that remind me of a picture I saw as a child. The sound you'll hear from this little hide-a-way is silence, broken by the occasional chipmunk chatter and bird song. It is a place where you can actually hear the leaves flutter when a breeze whispers through the trees. In winter, snow will hang heavy

on the limbs of cedars, yellow pine, red fir and tamarack. It's a post card waiting to happen.

In addition to the spectacular views, the truly unique features of this project are the amount of common area and the close proximity to downtown Sandpoint. Whisper Ridge will have a private eight acre park, which they plan to name "Manny's Park" in recognition of the previous owner. Manny's Park is home to a Yew tree that a forester has stated he believes is one of the largest in North Idaho. An impressive stand of cedars tower over the park, casting a cool shade that invites a leisurely walk among the evergreens. There's a natural retaining wall of moss-covered stones and the walking path takes you over a small spring.

The plans are to preserve over two-thirds of the land in it's present state, with the enhancement of trails, ponds, a waterfall, and gazebo. There are approximately three and one-half miles of trail systems meandering through the property, which connects with state and Bureau of Land Management land.

The park will have easy walking paths for those who want to take a stroll, while others will be medium-level for hiking. For those who want a challenge, there is always the goat trail with some of the most spectacular views in Idaho. Standing amid the old growth trees, the entire valley is laid out before you.

"You should see the view when the moon comes up over the Cabinet Mountains," said Skinner. "In the winter and spring, when these mountains are snowcapped, it's just fantastic. My wife and I watched a big mule deer come

within a few feet of us one evening. Moose, mule deer and chipmunks are the animals we've seen the most. Joe (Mire) even found a pair of nice elk sheds one afternoon."

Visiting with Eric, his obvious love of the land and the project shines through.

"When I stand on Whisper Ridge, I get the feeling that when God created the earth, he must have been standing on this mountain and thought, 'What a cool place' and put us all here to enjoy it. We have a lot of respect for this land, and that's why we're trying to preserve it as best we can."

For more information about Whisper Ridge, call 208-255-3800 or 800-205-8771.



Drawing by J.L.Skinner

