

Bjerkhamn's back to building small homes

Businessman Bjorn Bjerkhamn giving details about the housing plan which he said would provide jobs at this difficult time.

By **Maria Bradshaw**
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Construction magnate Bjorn Bjerkhamn has gone back to his roots.

Twenty years after leaving the low-income housing market to concentrate on luxury developments, the prominent businessman has returned to providing affordable housing for Barbadians.

Ridge Meadows at the Ridge, Christ Church, where more than 600 houses are being built, is his brainchild.

Speaking to the **Sunday Sun**

during an exclusive interview, Bjerkhamn, 76, who owns several companies, including Spring Homes, Caribbean Homes, the Jada Group and Preconco, said this was his way of giving back.

"I bought the land five years ago and we finally got the permission to do this. The price that the plantation ended up selling us the land at was a very good price, so we translated that into the price of the houses," he disclosed.

The development consists



of two-bedroom, one-bathroom; three-bedroom, one-bathroom; and three-bedroom, two-bathroom houses. The land and house packages range from \$185 000 to \$260 000.

The project began before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic but has resumed full steam with 200 people employed.

Not only has it pleased Bjerkhamn to keep staff on the job during this difficult time, he said, but public response to the houses has been overwhelming.

"We've had extremely good reaction. The first 60 houses we are now putting in are all spoken for," he said, adding that a similar housing development which he undertook at Mile-and-a-Quarter, St Peter, "was a dress rehearsal" for the Christ Church project.

Selling 20 a month

"At Mile-and-a-Quarter, we were selling one house a month. That's not the case here. We are selling about 20 a month. It's the price point here that helps, plus location."

Yet, the project was not without its share of controversy and setbacks.

Initially, his application to change the land use from agriculture to residential use was turned down by the Town & Country Planning Department, forcing him to appeal. When he received the green light, it came with strong stipulations.

Bjerkhamn recalled the

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"furore" which was caused when the small roundabout was installed on the road outside the project but he said that was one of the stipulations. Today, he is pleased that people have come to realise its value.

In addition, while he has received permission to construct 749 houses, Bjerkhamn said that would be scaled down to just over 600 due mainly to the topography.

"It took a lot of persuading to persuade the Government to allow me to do that," he said of the multiple houses being constructed.

As one of the top builders in Barbados, Bjerkhamn recalled how he started building low-income houses for the National Housing Corporation more than 40 years ago.

While he moved on to the high-end market undertaking

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Ministry of Transport,
Works and Water Resources
Pine East-West Boulevard,
Pine, St. Michael
Barbados, W.I.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Transport Works and Water Resources will be hosting another Virtual Town Hall meeting on **Monday October 12th at 7p.m.** to further discuss the major road rehabilitation project scheduled for Highway 1.

All residents, businesses, churches and schools that fall within the corridor, from the **Frank Worrell Roundabout in Black Rock, St. Michael** to **Seaview in St. James** are invited to log on to the meeting.

To join the meeting:

Topic: Ministry of Transport Works and Water Resources
2nd Virtual Town Hall meeting
Time: Oct 12, 2020

Join zoom meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91076541265?pwd=bkhBVjgzaXFicE0ra1hGZWFKd3lLUT09>

Meeting ID: 910 7654 1265
Passcode: 206560

You may also review the draft traffic management plan for the work area on the ministry's facebook page at...

<https://www.facebook.com/mtwwrb/>

your views are important to us and we encourage your participation as we seek to ensure that this major traffic artery is upgraded for motorists and pedestrians.



Workmen at Ridge Meadows, Christ Church, where more than 600 houses are being built.

‘Giving back’ to Barbados

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some of the multimillion-dollar buildings along the West Coast, such as St Peter’s Bay and Port Ferdinand, he said those also had challenges.

“On the luxury market, we do okay. Right now, with the price correction, it means that the price of high-end real estate has come down by around 20 per cent. When you build places like those, the cost of building exceeds the cost you can get selling it.”

However, he is confident that the affordable housing market would pay off, not for him, but for Barbadians.

“I have not sold affordable houses for maybe 20 years. When we do these houses, we don’t really make much money on them but I am not in these things to make money. To me, low-income housing is giving back to Barbados because every Bajan wants to own a piece of the rock. So, I don’t look to make any ‘kill-cow’ of money over these things.”

So far, he said, people

employed in the public sector were showing the most interest in the houses.

A strict covenant is in place to ensure that the aesthetics of the neighbourhood is maintained, he added.

Covenants

“We have covenants that stop you being a nuisance to your neighbour. You are not allowed to set up a mechanic workshop, pig farm and you can’t burn garbage,” he said.

He also revealed that lending institutions have been working with individuals to secure mortgages, while there were also companies that would install the finishes such as cupboards and tiles, since the houses were being sold without these.

Bjerkhamn said he was confident that Phase 1, which consists of 300 houses, would be well received, adding that as soon as those were sold, he would proceed to the other phases.



Some of the houses being built at Ridge Meadows, the Ridge, Christ Church. (Pictures by Reco Moore.)



CLEAN ENERGY BRIDGE PROJECT

The Barbados Light & Power Company continues work on its Clean Energy Bridge project in St. Lucy, to support the island’s transition to 100% renewable energy generation by 2030. The public is asked to note that over the next two weeks, heavy equipment will be transported from Maycocks Beach to the company’s site at Trents.

This equipment will be accompanied by Light & Power vehicles and will travel from Fryers Well, along the Charles Duncan O’Neil Highway, through Checker Hall and then turn left onto the project site.

Each move on the road is estimated to take a few hours and the roads will remain open for the entire duration of the move. Road users are therefore asked to proceed with caution. For your safety, please comply with the directions of all flag persons.

In addition, where power lines are required to be shifted to allow passage, customers in some areas close to the route may experience brief power outages.

Light & Power apologizes for any inconvenience that this activity may cause and thanks you for your cooperation.

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