



Orenco Station

Hillsboro, Oregon

Project Type:
Residential

Case No:
C029001

Year:
1999

SUMMARY

A 190-acre, transit-oriented new community in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon. Its pedestrian-oriented master plan provides for 1,834 dwelling units, including single-family homes, townhouses, accessory units, loft units, and apartments. The plan also includes a mixed-use town center with offices and housing above ground-floor retail. Additional parcels are dedicated to apartments and a shopping center.

FEATURES

- Pedestrian- and transit-oriented development
 - Mixed-use town center
 - Small-lot development
 - Alley parking
 - Accessory units
 - Live/work units
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SPECIAL FEATURES

- Pedestrian- and transit-oriented development
- Mixed-use town center
- Small-lot development
- Alley parking
- Accessory units
- Live/work units

MASTER DEVELOPER

Pacific Realty Associates, L.P.
15350 S.W. Sequoia Parkway
Suite 300
Portland, Oregon 97224
503-624-6300

RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECT

Iverson Associates, Inc.
151 Kalmus Drive, C140
Costa Mesa, California 92626
714-549-3479

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

Costa Pacific Homes
8625 S.W. Cascade Avenue
Suite 606
Beaverton, Oregon 97008
503-646-8888

TOWN CENTER ARCHITECT

Fletcher Farr Ayotte
708 S.W. Third Street
Suite 200
Portland, Oregon 97204

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Walker & Macy
111 S.W. Oak, Suite 200
Portland, Oregon 97204

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

"The ability to walk to a quart of milk" is how Rudy Kadlub of Costa Pacific Homes summarizes the philosophy behind Orenco Station, a 190-acre new community in the western suburbs of Portland, Oregon. Orenco Station is a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community, planned by master developer Pacific Realty Associates, L.P. (PacTrust), for 1,834 housing units, as well as retail and office space. The compact design includes a wide range of housing types, from single-family detached houses to accessory units over garages to live/work lofts and townhouses over retail shops. The common thread of the community is a formal system of open spaces and mini-parks—a "string of pearls," as the development team calls it—terminating in the recently opened Orenco Station stop of the Tri-Met MAX light-rail line connecting downtown Portland to its suburbs.

The site originally was zoned for industrial use and later for subdivision housing; development of the present community followed the site's designation as a "town center" in the Portland Metro Area 2040 Plan, which established a gradient of residential density targets at varying distances from the Orenco light-rail stop and mandated mixed-use development. With little precedent for either higher-density or mixed-use development in the area, PacTrust, under the direction of CEO Peter Bechen and corporate architect Ken Grimes, assembled a team of designers and engineers and a home builder to explore the uncharted waters.

A market survey was conducted of employees in the surrounding high-tech facilities to establish their design and housing preferences and to define affordability issues. The survey and subsequent focus groups revealed respondents' affinity for the look and feel of the older Portland suburbs, with their Craftsman and cottage-style architecture, picturesque rose gardens, and neighborhood shops. The research reflected a somewhat nostalgic outlook, but one that fit well with the concept of more densely developed, but livable, transit-oriented development. Two years of discussions, design studies, and negotiations with city, state and transit officials ensued, culminating in a zoning ordinance customized for Orenco Station, which was dubbed a "station community residential village," or SCR.V. The new zoning established design guidelines to allow for—and ensure—a heterogeneous, urban mix of housing types and land uses not typically found in the suburbs.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

The light-rail station, located at the southern edge of Orenco Station, served to generate the community's design. The primary circulation network—both vehicular and pedestrian—runs from the station to the town center and culminates in a formal village green; a secondary circulation network and open spaces branch laterally from this spine. Views terminate in strong, visual elements, such as the classically inspired pergolas at each end of the village green, and smaller miniparks are judiciously placed throughout the community. The developer and architects consciously scripted a pedestrian orientation to encourage walking and, on a more philosophical plane, to encourage a more community-oriented life style.

The town center lies at the intersection of the north/south axis and Cornell Road, an existing major arterial road that bisects Orenco Station. The town center structures, designed by Fletcher Farr Ayotte Architects, provide for smaller neighborhood retail uses such as a coffee shop and brewpub. Set to open in June 1999, the retail buildings in some cases will have roll-up garage door fronts to allow for outdoor dining along the extra-wide 17-foot sidewalks. Office space and housing will be located on the second and third floors, above the retail uses.

Several design devices were employed in the residential areas to reinforce the pedestrian- and community-orientation of Orenco Station. Residential street widths were held to a minimum (25 feet, with parking on one side), and intersections were narrowed to calm traffic. To further reduce the impact of automobiles, Orenco's site design provides for alley-accessed parking, thereby eliminating the ubiquitous garage-door-dominated front building elevations, curb cuts, and driveways. In order to minimize costs, alley paving was held to 16 feet, with turn-ins expanding to the full 24 feet. The space between the garage turn-ins is used for plantings to soften the appearance of the alleys.

Single-family lots at Orenco Station are relatively small, ranging from 3,680 to 4,500 square feet; the smallest lots typically are 40 feet wide. Dwellings are positioned five feet from the side lot line on one side, with a passive-use easement to use the five-foot yard granted to the abutting lot; the result is a usable side yard 12 to 15 feet wide (on a 40-foot lot), running the length of the house. The layout of houses is similar to the more traditional zero lot line layout, in which each house's footprint is pushed fully to one side of the lot. The difference is that in a zero lot line layout, building codes do not permit windows on the lot line building elevation, and the lot line wall has to be one-hour fire rated. Orenco houses net the same side yard as a zero lot line unit, but they have the benefit of windows on the side elevation. Visual intrusion into the neighboring side yard is held to a minimum by placing the windows higher in the wall.

DESIGN

Orenco's units are close to the street, with eight-foot maximum setbacks for townhouses and 13- to 19-foot setbacks for detached units. Façade are based on Portland-area Craftsman and cottage-style designs; they typically include front porches. While the smaller-than-usual frontyard setback and the front porches are intended to encourage a more active and engaged street life, the dwellings are raised above the sidewalk, as in many older Portland

neighborhoods, to afford a measure of privacy as well.

The issue of accessory units (carriage homes) over garages was approached cautiously by the development team. The market for these spaces, as well as the impact of mixing a smaller residential unit with the larger main residence, was relatively untested in the market. The 514-square-foot carriage units were offered as a buyer's option, with two different plan configurations: a studio option (one large room, a bath, and small closet) and an apartment option (living room, sleeping alcove, kitchen, and bath). About one in four buyers have purchased the accessory space, and most of them have taken the apartment version, currently priced at \$49,500. Each accessory unit has a separate legal address; exterior stairs provide direct access from the alley. One parking space is carved out of the rear portion of the lot for each accessory unit. The units have windows that overlook the alley as well as a small porch at the top of the stairs, providing a measure of security for the alleys.

Orenco's housing units are relatively small: single-family detached models range from 1,400 to 1,700 square feet. Unit designs include two- and three-bedroom models, although some models have flex spaces allowing for conversion to three- or four-bedroom residences. In response to emerging consumer lifestyles and preferences, all units have a dedicated home-office space, typically an alcove or open area adjacent to a second-floor stair landing. Dwellings are constructed with high-speed wiring for telecommunications systems.

Unlike in more traditional subdivisions, the three- and four-unit townhouse structures are integrated with the single-family detached housing, often at the end of a single-family block. As residential architect Lee Iverson puts it, "The townhouses At Orenco Station are not segregated into some sort of townhouse corral." The townhouse structures are designed to look like larger cousins of the adjacent single-family houses, with asymmetric and varied facades and entrances.

Other townhouses, designed by architects Fletcher Farr Ayotte (FFA), will be located above the retail shops in the town center. FFA also has designed three-story live/work units for the rear parcels of the town center. These units will offer a ground-floor professional office/studio, combined with a two-story loft residence.

Sales at Orenco Station have exceeded projections, according to Kadlub of Costa Pacific Homes. Absorption has averaged 7.5 units per month, and prices are running about 20 to 30 percent above the area average. Homebuyers at Orenco Station have been primarily singles, professional couples, and empty nesters. As may be expected because of the small-lot/small-unit design, only a minority have been families with children.

EXPERIENCE GAINED

- Higher densities and mixed housing types can succeed in suburban markets. Success, says PacTrust and its design team, comes in large measure from the attention paid to the public spaces, which offsets any disadvantage in creating smaller private spaces.
- Although the town center is not yet completed, the project's community and pedestrian orientation has been cited in post-purchase focus groups as primary reasons for purchasing a home at Orenco Station.
- Accessory units have been a success. Use of the space has varied; some owners have used it for office space or guest quarters, and others have rented it as small apartments. The availability of accessory units has added to the market appeal of the project.

PROJECT DATA**LAND USE INFORMATION¹**

Site area: 61.2 acres²
 Total dwelling units: 446
 Gross density: 7.3 units/acre
 Average lot size: 3,000 square feet
 Net density: 10.85 units/acre
 Total parking spaces: 835
 Parking ratio: 1.9 spaces/unit

LAND USE PLAN³

Use	Acres	Percent of site
Residential	30.25	49.4
Recreation/amenities	1.05	1.7
Roads/parking	20.1	32.8
Open space	7.8	12.7
Mixed uses	2.0	3.3
Total	61.2	100

UNIT INFORMATION

Unit type	Lot size (square foot)	Floor area (square foot)	Number planned/built	Current sales price
Detached				
2 bedrooms/ 2.5 baths	4,500	1,427	42/25	\$194,000
2 bedrooms/ 2 baths	4,500	1,447	43/26	195,000
3 bedrooms/ 2.5 baths	4,500	1,691	44/27	207,000
3 bedrooms/ 2.5 baths	4,500	1,706	45/28	222,000
Townhome				
2 bedrooms/ 2 baths	3,500	1,208	27/17	164,000
2 bedrooms/ 2.5 baths	3,500	1,446	34/20	178,000
3 bedrooms/ 2.5 baths	3,500	1,669	27/17	187,000
Condominium				
(Unit type to be determined)	2,000	1,067	36/0	144,000
	2,000	1,189	56/0	160,000
	2,000	1,315	56/0	167,000
	2,000	1,536	36/0	190,000

DEVELOPMENT COST INFORMATION

Cost	Total	Cost/dwelling unit	Cost/residential square foot
Site acquisition	\$5,400,000	\$12,100	\$8.52
Site improvement	12,000,000	26,900	18.92
Construction	45,800,000	102,700	72.73
Soft costs	13,100,000	29,400	20.66
Total	\$76,300,000	\$171,100	\$120.33

DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Site purchased: 1985
 Planning started: 1994
 Construction started: April 1997
 Sales started: September 1997
 First closing: January 1998

DIRECTIONS

From airport: Airport Way east to I-205 south to I-84 west into Portland. Then I-5 south to I-104 west to U.S. 26 (Sunset Highway) west to Hillsboro. Take Cornelius Pass exit. Go south (left on freeway) on Cornelius Pass Road one-half mile. Go west (right) on Cornell Road one-half mile. Right on Orenco Station Parkway.

Driving time: 20 minutes in non-peak traffic.

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This Development Case Study is intended as a resource for subscribers in improving the quality of future projects. Data contained herein were made available by the project's development team and constitute a report on, not an endorsement of, the project by ULI-the Urban Land Institute.

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A 190-acre new community, Orenco Station features a compact, pedestrian-oriented design and includes a wide range of housing types, from single-family detached houses to accessory units over garages to live/work lofts and townhouses over retail shops.



The Craftsman-style design with front porch is intended to be reminiscent of the architecture of old portland neighborhoods.



Townhouse structures are integrated with single-family detached housing.



Residential streets are kept as narrow as possible, and intersections are "bulbed" to help calm traffic.



The Village Green, with its classically inspired pergolas, is the focal point of an interconnected system of open space.



Site plan for town center.

ORENCO STATION

ILLUSTRATIVE OVERALL SITE PLAN
MASTER DEVELOPER PAC-TRUST



Overall site plan.