

## RAVES FOR APARTMENT RENOVATION / DEVELOPER FIXES UP THE RUN-DOWN LONG LAKE ESTATES AND WINS KUDOS FROM TENANTS AND OFFICIALS

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### Document Text

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Tri Vo has done it again. The Lacey developer has taken a troubled apartment complex - this time in Thurston County - and transformed it from a state of disrepair to a source of community pride.

One of his companies, Pacific Land Co. LLC, will hold a grand opening from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. today for the newly refurbished Long Lake Estates at 1919 Mayes Road.

Much about the 46-unit complex has changed. The name is now Lake View Village, and the address the 7700 block of 19th Lane Southeast.

The buildings sport new vinyl siding, landscaping, appliances, energy-efficient windows and brightly painted walls. In six months, the failing septic system will be replaced by a county sewer hook-up, company spokesman Bob Okagi said. And in five years or so, an additional 100 units are to be added.

Vo took over the lease on the park-like, state-owned property last fall after the Department of Ecology fined the previous lessee because the unpermitted on-site septic system was causing water quality problems.

Now it's a thrill to live there, said apartment manager and resident Karen Prestwood.

"My heart is really into this because the potential is wonderful," said Prestwood, who moved into the complex in 1996. "We can really make a difference."

But for some tenants, such as Jim Staggs, the renovations mean they'll need to find new homes.

"I'm living off a small military pension," he said. "I'm paying \$495, and my rent would jump to something like \$650."

He's moving to subsidized housing in Olympia, but he'd rather stay in his home.

Thurston County Commissioner Judy Wilson said the complex wasn't intended to be low-income housing. The lake-front property has the potential to command higher rents.

The renovation could mean fewer calls for the sheriff's department, Thurston County Sheriff's Lt. Jesse Maynard said. Deputies have been called to the complex 63 times since May 1997, for everything from domestic disputes to burglaries, he said.

"Anything that improves it and would reduce the burden on us, I'm more than happy to see it happen," Maynard said.

Dave Campbell, a Lacey police crime prevention officer, said the improvements Vo made last year to the former Brandonwood apartments in Lacey are still evident.

"Prior to its closing down and reopening, it was one of the two highest-calls for service for (apartment) units in the city," Campbell said. "Now it is the lowest ... and that's after one year."

The city had ordered the dilapidated, six-building complex on the 2500 block of Ruddell Road Southeast vacated for health and safety reasons.

Before that, Vo had built only new homes. But in Brandonwood he saw an opportunity to give something back to the

community that welcomed him when he came to America from Vietnam.

Not only did Vo spruce up the place, but he started screening tenants, making them sign contracts that promised they wouldn't commit crimes. He also put managers through city training on how to reduce crime. He'll do much of the same at Lake View Village, Vo said.

Campbell's only disappointment is that the second complex Vo refurbished was outside the city limits.

Not all has gone well for Vo. He agreed to renovate the complex with the idea that he eventually would add 100 units and transform them into condominiums. But the Department of Natural Resources, which administers the property for the state, said no. It's easier to deal with one lessee than multiple condo owners, Natural Resources property manager Rod Rennie said.

That decreased the property value significantly, Vo said, and he plans to sell his interest in the property. But he's still happy he did it.

"I don't like to see things wasted," he said.

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**[Illustration]**

BW PHOTO: Vo (B3) COLOR PHOTO / Janet Jensen/The News Tribune: Charlotte Warnes, 7, plays Friday with brothers Elijah, 2, and Michael, 5, outside the renamed Lake View Village apartments, which developer Tri Vo thoroughly updated. Most tenants are pleased, though some must move because of a rent increase. COLOR MAP / Derrick Quenzer; The News Tribune: Beautified apartments

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**Abstract (Document Summary)**

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